

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1788.—VOL. LXIX.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING AUGUST 7, 1897.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"I WISH," BRIAN SAID AFTER A LONG PAUSE, "THIS SORT OF THING COULD GO ON FOR EVER."

THE CASHIER'S SISTER.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

MRS. DREW had removed her lodger's breakfast things, and now was chatting in her maternal way to him. He stood before the window—a tall, well-knit figure, strong and muscular; and now and again he turned his handsome head and asked some trivial question, which Mrs. Drew answered in her roundabout way.

For a few moments his eyes had rested on the row of pretty semi-detached houses opposite, and Mrs. Drew noticed the third one claimed most of his attention. Presently he said,—

"How pretty the windows of No. 3 are. The white curtains and tastefully-arranged flowers give the whole place an air of home. What sort of people live there?"

The landlady's answer this time was direct, much to Brian Varcoe's astonishment.

"Rather strange folks, sir, Mr. Herne and his sister. The people call her eccentric. I suppose because she does things that no one else thinks of doing, and isn't like the other women of the town either in dress or manners."

"And what is Mr. Herne?"

"Cashier at the bank; and she keeps tradesmen's books; such a funny thing for a woman to do."

At that point Mrs. Drew was called away, and Brian began lazily to form some idea of "that eccentric Miss Herne."

He pictured her a tall, angular woman of uncertain age, very plain, very precise, sharp of voice and feature; and wondered inwardly how it was her house was the most attractive in the row.

Breaking upon his reverie came the sound of many boyish voices, some full of thoughtless laughter, some of mockery.

"I thought Mrs. Drew told me this place was quiet," muttered the young man, discontentedly; "it's a perfect Babel."

Then there came in sight a troop of rosy, mischievous, and malicious boys, who followed with derisive shouts in the wake of a tall, powerfully-built negro, with the mildest of faces and most reproachful eyes.

Now and again he turned on his tormentors and spoke some broken words of expostulation, which caused the young rascals to shout and laugh the louder, for a negro in quiet Westerton was a novelty.

Suddenly, as the man, driven to bay, faced the boys, the door of No. 3 was opened, and a lithe, blue-robed figure ran down the steps and crossed to the stranger.

Brian leaned out of his window, and heard a clear voice say,—

"For shame, boys! Is it brave to molest a helpless, friendless stranger, a man who has done you no harm? Oh! you cowards."

And as the indignant tones vibrated through

the air, the boys shrank back as if ashamed, and only a low murmur broke from them.

Before Brian could withdraw from the window to offer the young lady assistance she had taken one of the negro's black, horny hands in hers, that were thin and white.

"Come with me," she said, and led him unreluctantly up the steps; and not until she was closing the door did she catch a glimpse of Brian's dark face and head.

The whole affair passed so quickly that it seemed unreal to the young man, and only the voices of the boys as they trooped off to the grammar-school, convinced him he had not been dreaming.

The glimpse he had caught of the young lady's face had favourably impressed him, and he admired her courage and kindness not a little.

"I wonder who she is—perhaps a niece or younger sister of the eccentric lady?"

He took up his hat and went downstairs, meeting Mrs. Drew in the tiny hall.

"I'm afraid you've been disturbed by the noise in the street," she said, apologetically; "but those schoolboys are regular 'limps of Satan.' Did you see Miss Herne, sir?"

"The young lady in blue?" he questioned, and the landlady answered,—

"The very same, Mr. Varcoe. Did you ever see anything more absurd than the way she rushed out to that nigger? Kindness is all very well, but I don't believe in carrying it to such absurd lengths."

"I think I understand now why the young lady is called eccentric," Brian said, with covert amusement; and, wishing Mrs. Drew good-morning, went out, leaving her puzzled as to his opinion of Miss Herne.

Meanwhile, the young girl had seated her strange visitor in the pretty sitting-room, and now turned her bright, kind face upon him with the question,—

"Will you tell me your name?"

The grateful eyes grew softer as he answered her, brokenly,—

"Jo, missy; nothing but Jo."

"Where have you come from—is it far?" with a swift glance at his worn boots and dusty clothes.

He told her he had come from Liverpool, and brought with him a letter to Squire Atherton from a cousin in New Guinea, with which he drew out a soiled envelope, and bade her read its contents.

The grey eyes glanced along the irregular lines. They were full of warm praise of Jo, and the request that the Squire would take him into his service.

The postscript said Joe had come to England to seek a lost brother, who, ten years ago, had arrived in the country with his master, and had never since been heard of.

Miss Herne folded up the letter.

"You haven't far to go now," she said, kindly. "Squire Atherton lives at Barrydown, which is but two miles from the town; and he is reported to be generous. But, perhaps, you are hungry," and without waiting an answer she rang for fresh coffee, and began hastily to cut some bread and ham, bidding Jo eat.

The avidity with which he did so testified to a long fast.

When he had satisfied his hunger, and tried to thank his young hostess, she began to speak in the soft tones that to the negro's musical ear and grateful heart were the loveliest he had heard.

"You must not mind the curious glances of the people or the shouting of the boys, Jo; they are no unusual to strangers in these parts that they are often very rude. I don't think they mean to be unkind; they are only thoughtless. Now let me direct you to Squire Atherton's."

The man rose slowly and clumsily; his dark eyes glistened, and his whole face was instinct with gratitude.

"Missy," he said, with a sort of simple dignity that suited well his massive figure, "Missy, Heaven bless yer; nobody never gave me such goodness afore."

With a gesture Miss Herne stayed his words.

"Don't thank me, Jo; there is no need," and led him to the door.

Then she directed him the road to Barrydown, gave him sixpence, and was about to close the door when Jo said suddenly,—

"Jest stay a minute, missy. Like I shan't see yer no more, but if I can ever do somethin' for yer—"

He did not finish his speech, but taking one of the slender white hands reverently in his touched it with his lips, and went slowly away.

"Well, I never!" ejaculated Mrs. Drew, watching behind the curtains. "What next, I wonder! A strolling nigger kissing her hand on the doorstep, too! The girl must be mad!"

What Westerton thought of her was a matter of perfect indifference to Miss Herne.

After Jo's departure she opened her desk quietly, and began to sort out a quantity of bills; then she produced a huge ledger from a recess, and sat down, prepared for a long morning's work.

Hour after hour the busy white fingers went nimbly over the lined pages, never pausing, never faltering in their work.

She heard the rush of boys' feet down the street, and knew what was over, but she did not glance up; the sun shone brightly in her open window, the birds and butterflies flitted through the soft May air, the bees kept up a perpetual monotonous drone, but the pretty head was never lifted, the grey eyes never turned aside to look at the fair outer world until the church clock rang out a quarter to two.

Then Miss Herne gathered her papers and books together and placed them carefully in the recess, and a fresh-looking, country girl entered at the same time, and began to lay the cloth for dinner.

"We must be very quick, Lizzy," the young lady said; "for Mr. Herne will be in before we are ready," and she assisted the girl with those nimble white fingers of hers, that looked as if they had known no toil.

The simple preparations being completed, she walked to the window, yawned, and stretched out her arms, looked at her pretty round wrists with a sort of comical pity.

"Oh! dear, how dreadfully they ache!" she said, just a trifle wearily, and was quite unconscious that Brian Varcoe watched her from behind his curtains with half-curious, half-admiring eyes.

She heard a quick, firm step in the street, and ran to the door to meet her brother.

"Gilbert," she said, "I've quite an adventure to tell you; but come in and dine first. Poor old boy, you must be hungry."

Seeing her welcoming smiles and gestures, Brian was inclined to envy Mr. Herne the possession of such a pretty sister, and even felt vexed when the door was closed, and he could see her no more.

Brother and sister sat opposite each other, and his face was very grave; the grey eyes meeting his grew dark with a sudden shadow, and in tones unlike her usually cheerful ones, the sister said,—

"Gilbert, dear, is it any help to think of that day?"

Gilbert's face wore a still more melancholy tinge.

"No help—it is madness, but thoughts will come whether we would or no. Isolt, my dear, do you remember it is your birthday, and I have giving you nothing?"

She smiled, as if anxious to chase away his gloom.

"I had not forgotten. Won't you wish me many happy returns of the day?"

"How can I," bitterly, "when night and day I pray I may not live to see the anniversary of our shame?"

The girl shivered.

"Oh!" she said, bitterly. "Five long years we have borne the burden of another's sin—are we never to win forgetfulness, or be free of this nightmare fear? Gilbert, I am only twenty-two, and yet I have known as much sorrow as most folks. It isn't fair, and my whole soul protests against it!"

Then, at the sight of his misery, she rose,

clasped her pretty hands about his neck, laid her brown head on his shoulder.

"Poor, poor old boy! I believe it has been worse for you than for me—it has made you old before your time, grave beyond your years."

"Whilst you, in your unselfishness, are all brightness; and, Isolt, you grow prettier each day!"

"You think so only because you love me," she said, returning to her seat. "No creature was ever so blind to my imperfections as my own brother," and the meal being ended she filled his pipe and gave it to him.

Then she gave him a brief account of the morning's adventure, and expressed a wish to hear what success poor Jo had had with Mr. Atherton.

Gilbert was very quiet for a time, then he said, gravely,—

"Do you know what people are saying of Mr. Atherton?"

"No; there is always some poor little scandal afloat, and you know I don't listen to gossip, Gilbert."

"I know that; but this concerns yourself, my dear. It is currently said that Mr. Atherton visits this house for your sake only, and that you give him every encouragement in your power, because he is rich, well-born, influential, and not for any merit he may possess."

Isolt's expression was one of supreme indifference.

"Is that all?" she questioned, calmly. "That is a very mild report for Westerton;" then with a sudden change in face and manner, "Don't you remember, Gilbert, how five years ago I promised Isolt to stay with you? Do you think I should break my word?"

"My dear," very gently, and with almost fatherly tenderness, "you have not yet met the man you could love. Atherton is generous, good-looking, rich, but he is not the man you will marry. One day, however, you will leave—for another home, and be happier in it than I could ever make you."

She knelt beside him, her fair face upturned to his, and in her eyes the shadow of sorrow and shame lay deep and dark.

"Supposing I could even love anyone better, or even so well as you, Gilbert, what man, knowing our story, the fearful blot upon our name, would be willing to marry me? And I think, dear, it would kill me to tell it. Oh! Heaven," with sudden passion, "love is neither for you nor me. We are set outside and beyond it for ever, and all we can hope for is peace. We have been at rest here, but how long will our comfort last? If our story became known here, or—if he returns, as I feel he will, we must flit again—give up home and occupation. Sometimes I feel as if the shameful secret will kill me."

Her fine grey eyes flamed and the delicate nostrils quivered, whilst the rounded cheeks had grown ghastly. The sun shone full upon her slim, young figure in its pretty blue gown, but Isolt shivered.

"Why should we meet trouble half-way?" she said, almost sharply, and but for the anguish in her voice one would have said she was angry.

"Let us be glad whilst we may; and as for Denis Atherton, rest assured, my dear, I shall never leave you for him."

"But if he loved you well enough to overlook all, to ignore all—how then, Isolt?"

"Still my answer would be, 'no,'" quietly; "and as for this passion of his, I believe it purely imaginary. He has never said a word to me that might not have been proclaimed on the house-tops. Change the subject, Gilbert; it is extremely unpleasant to me."

Always obedient to her will, always anxious to serve and please her, Mr. Herne said, without preface,—

"Mrs. Drew has let her rooms at last."

"I saw a man's head at the window this morning, and thought it would have been kinder had he protected Jo instead of looking idly down at him. Who and what is he?"

Indifferently. "His name I don't know, but he is a land-surveyor, and has taken the apartments for six months; he arrived at Westerton only last night."

and is said to have brought introductory letters to the Rainforth, so I suppose he is well connected. But, dear me, Isolt, it is nearly three—I must be off; punctuality finds favour at the bank. One day I may be manager—then you shall have good times and no work."

She watched her brother's slim form as he hurried down the quiet street, and her heart ached for him; he was only ten years her senior, but already his shoulders had contracted a "stoop"; his face was lined with care and thought, his eyes sunken, and his dark hair slightly streaked with grey. Isolt knew whose crime had made him an old man so early, whose hand had put love and joy out of his reach for ever; she knew, too, that in all the world none loved her so dearly as her brother, and that to him she was his dearest possession. With a sudden burst of passion she hid her face in her hands, and sobbed in a low dreadful way.

"Oh, Heaven; oh, Heaven! five years ago to-day, and it seems a lifetime! Will nothing wash away the stain, or free us from this dreadful fear!"

But very soon she was calm again, and taking a book, lay upon the couch, seemingly engrossed in a stirring story of love and adventures. The flickering light played in the folds of her dainty skirts, whilst her brown hair caught and imprisoned the stray sunbeams that were fain to wander over the white brow and kiss the heavily fringed lids. In the middle of a chapter she was startled by a sharp peal of the door-bell, and a moment after Lizzie announced Mr. Atherton. Miss Horne rose from her couch, although her visitor made a deprecatory gesture; she blushed, too, remembering that all Westerton connected their names—she wondered had he heard the report. After shaking hands and prevailing upon Isolt to take up her former position, the young man said,—

"I have come to thank you in Jo's behalf for your goodness and championship of his cause."

The colour mounted into her brow. "It was an easy and simple thing I did; the poor fellow has exaggerated the details. But I am very glad he has reached you safely, and I sincerely hope you will be able to give him employment."

"Your wish is my law," bending somewhat towards her, "but in this you have been forestalled. My cousin—who sent him to me—was the dearest friend of my boyhood, and I could not refuse any request of his. The post of under-gardener was vacant, I have given it to Jo; and because you have expressed such interest in him I shall see that he wants nothing."

She could not misunderstand his looks, although she feigned to believe his words mere polite commonplaces, and her eyes drooped before the young man's ardent gaze.

The more confused she grew the greater was his confidence and courage. She was penniless, he rich—surely he might hope for her love! She was unknown, he a man of great importance in the county—but he scarcely thought of those things as he drank in every detail of her fresh, pretty face and dainty figure. He stooped over her, and stretching out one hand laid it upon hers.

"Isolt," he said, lingering over the name, because it was so dear to him.

The girl flushed deeply and unmistakably, and said, tremulously,—

"Mr. Atherton, you must not call me that; to you I am Miss Horne, the cashier's sister."

"You are far, far more to me than you think or believe—Isolt, my darling, my darling, I love you! I know you have never thought of me in that way, and I fancied it might be because I have never spoken to you of my love before. I knew you were too proud to give your heart to any man unthought, unasked—"

She broke in hurriedly,—

"I had no suspicion of this. You have been very kind to me always, but I was not vain enough to imagine you desired me for your wife. I am very sorry—"

"You have not had time for thought; you confess yourself you had no idea of this. Give me time, my dearest, and I will teach you to

love me. I can offer you all that most women long for, but I am ashamed to speak to you of my possessions—things that win others have no influence on you. Let me come again and again, day by day, and you will get used to the idea; in time I believe you will learn to love me. Darling, don't send me away hopeless."

Her face was white as she answered,—
"Mr. Atherton, you have done me high honour, and I should, indeed, be base if I could for a moment encourage groundless hopes. I do not love you. I shall never marry, because all my future life is devoted to my brother."

Denis Atherton was almost angry with her. "This is folly; no woman goes through life without learning the lesson of love. Tell me, have you anything to urge against me—any reason why you should not marry me?"

"Yes," Isolt answered, steadily, "but it has nothing to do with you, it belongs to my past; let it alone. There is a very real and cruel reason why I should never marry any man. Be satisfied with that, for I shall not tell you more of my story."

Denis looked wan in the broad, yellow light. "Are you married?" he faltered, and Isolt laughed.

"No, I am not married. Has any man save yourself visited me since I have been in Westerton?"

"No," he admitted, almost sullenly, "but for aught I know to the contrary you may be engaged."

"I am not even engaged, Mr. Atherton. Pray disabuse your mind of such absurd ideas; my life is bound up in Gilbert."

"Being neither engaged nor married," said Denis, "there is nothing to prevent me wooing and winning you, Isolt."

Then the girl answered, with face averted and down-dropped lids,—

"Oh, yes there is. To all your entreaties I must give 'no' for an answer. Ah! you are a man of honour, and will not repeat anything I may say to you. Our names were once as pure as your own, if not so great an origin. We were proud of our honour; we had high notions of our own importance, but now—now—that is past! Our fair fame is tarnished, our shame so great we could not stay in our native place. My father died of a broken heart because a child of his had forgotten honour utterly, and when he was dead we—Gilbert and I—came away to a place where our shame is not known, and where we may hold up our heads again."

Denis Atherton's face expressed surprise and confusion at Isolt's confession, but when she ended love again shone in his blue eyes, and he stretched out his hand to touch hers, but she shrank from him.

"Was Gilbert the guilty one?" in a tone that said "I know he was," but she answered swiftly,—

"Oh, no! no! How mad you must be to accuse him of crime!—he who has always been honourable, generous, self-denying—he who has given up every hope of joy he ever had!"

"Then," hoarsely, "it was you!" And yet in his love he did not shrink from her, and when he looked into her face he was ashamed of his thought, for he saw something there that was not guilt or remorse, but reproach.

"Forgive me," he cried, carried out of himself by his love, "Isolt, sweetheart; forgive me. I might have known, I should have known, you could not sin grossly; and even if the fault, the crime, were yours, I love you so dearly that I would willingly ignore it, whatever it may be. My darling girl, I cannot find anything good in my life if you persist in sending me away. I don't care what black sleep your family contains; I only know I love you. I only feel my name is powerful enough to outweigh the sin of the past, and for your sake I will find congenial employment for Gilbert—"

"Stay," Isolt cried, sharply. "You are tempting me sorely, and you are aware of that. It is not generous to treat me thus; you know how much I long to help Gilbert to his one end and aim, but—but I am not quite prepared to do so at such a price—the loss of personal liberty, the right to love him and attend to his wants."

Ah, no, I cannot marry you now or ever, Mr. Atherton."

He caught her hands, and holding them in his firm clasp, entreated,—

"At least give me some hope."

"No; it is kinder to tell you the plain, unvarnished truth. I do not love you, I will not marry you."

The fair, good-looking face began to grow harder in expression, but still he urged,—

"Why are you bent upon wronging yourself by giving up your whole life to your brother? He, perhaps, will marry at some future time, and brothers' wives are not always cordial friends. Let me give you a home where you shall have nothing left to desire, where your whole life shall be one story of love. Ah, sweetheart, do not send me away! All I ever felt of good has come to me since first we met—for your sake I have resisted temptations, indulged in no dissipation. My darling! my darling! Heaven only knows what you are to me—how wasted my life will be without you!"

"You think so now," she answered, pitifully, but with no note of relenting in her clear, young voice; "in the future you will be glad I would not listen to you. If, as I believe, you are not only a gentleman, but a man, you will not urge me further, or at any time renew proposals that are so distasteful to me. For the honour you have done me I thank you, although I should never have believed your esteem greater had you not attempted to bribe me."

As she ceased he flung her hands aside, and with an oath, said,—

"You shall be my wife; I never lost a thing I really strove for. The day will come when you will love me, and long for me, Isolt."

She was angry at last.

"If the idea comforts you, pray do not dismiss it from your mind," and the great, grey eyes flashed with scorn.

In his infatuation Denis thought her prettier in this mood than any other, and with a sudden forward movement he caught her in his arms, and kissed the dainty mouth again and again with mad passion; and although she struggled to free herself he held her still, and in his embrace she was as powerless as a little child. She lifted one hand and struck him upon the cheek; the blow was sudden and sharp, and with an angry expression he let her go. Then she confronted him and her face was deadly white, her eyes seemed to burn into his soul.

"So you think to win your wife by coercion!" she said, in intense tones. "You force your caresses upon a woman who will have none of them! You have behaved like the lowest ruffian, and if you had any chance of winning me you have lost it for ever by your conduct. There is only one thing left for me to do—it is to tell you to go from this house and never to enter it again."

"My darling! my darling! in a moment of passion I forgot myself. Surely you will grant forgiveness for such a venial fault! I think I must have been mad—"

But Isolt was too enraged to listen.

"Such presumption," she said, "is not easily forgotten," and with a gesture of dismissal turned to her desk.

Denis Atherton moved to the door, there he paused.

"Will nothing make you pitiful?" he questioned.

"I have said all I intend saying on the subject; pray consider it closed."

So he went out into the golden sunshine, with dark face and angry eyes.

"She shall be my wife, soon or late," he thought. "I love her so well that I will not accept my dismissal; with or without her will she shall marry me!"

There was a storm of passion in his heart. He had always been fortune's favourite—had never yet desired anything money could not buy, and his disappointment was therefore the greater. But in all his life he had loved none so dearly as Isolt, the cashier's sister. She was not his equal by birth or wealth, but his love was so far more selfish that he cared nothing for those things—all

he cared for, all he longed for, was that she would give herself to him.

Men who knew his infatuation told him she was not even pretty, but to him hers was the loveliest face in all the world; and now, as he walked under the limes, he recalled the trick of her smile, the light in her eyes, the wonderful delicacy of her features, the lustrous red of the pretty lips, that, despite their firmness, were most kissable.

He was very miserable for the remainder of that day, and his servants suffered from the effects of his rejection. But, despite his misery, he had determined in the course of the week to present himself once more at "No. 3," and not leave until he had won a full and perfect pardon.

Isolt Herne vainly tried to settle to her work, but the afternoon's occurrence had totally unfitted her for anything but thought.

"Thank Heaven!" she whispered to her heart, "thank Heaven! I did not love him; it would then have been almost too hard for me to send him away. Oh! must I always go under this heavy cloud! Will nothing ever do away with the shame and sin that spoil my life, and make fair things less fair to me!"

With the recollection of her secret yet upon her, she covered upon the couch and hid her eyes with those small, white hands that knew toil, and did not turn delicately from it. She did not cry, because tears left traces upon her for hours, and she would not pain Gilbert; she only lay quite still, whilst the sun sloped slowly to the west, as if unwilling to go, and the birds outside made mad melody in the trees. At last she lifted herself on her elbow.

"If I only could feel as other girls do—if only one could forget the past! If only he were dead!"—she shivered at her own thought. "I am wicked enough to pray he may never return, wicked enough to wish his death! Oh, Heaven! how terrible his memory has made these last five years!"

Lower and yet lower sank the sun; the music in the trees was dying away; only an occasional twittering broke the silence, save for a lark that yet sang high up in the air; sweet scents came in at the open window, and the gnats buzzed loudly round the clattering vine.

The girl stirred uneasily, because all these things recalled more vividly just such an evening five years ago, when first life had grown dark for her, when she had seen the light stricken out of her father's face, and heard Gilbert's hoarse cry of agony and shame.

She remembered, too, the rapid wasting of the life so dear to her, the misery of that beloved face, as white as the pillows upon which it lay for three short weeks, that yet seemed ages to the sufferer because they were full of sudden dishonour.

"Oh! father, father!" the girl muttered, under her breath. "Why could I not die too? Why was I so strong that the shame had no power to kill me?"

She was very wretched. It was not often she allowed herself to dwell so much upon the past, because she had Gilbert to consider; and since their trouble came he had been father, mother, brother, all in all to her, and she strove to keep his home cheerful, and to meet him with bright smiles when he came weary from his daily tasks.

"He must not see me thus," she thought; and, springing up, went to her room, from which she presently emerged, dressed for walking.

Standing at the foot of the staircase she called Lizzie, and when the girl appeared left a message with her for Gilbert, to the effect that as her head ached badly she had gone out, and if he chose to meet her he was to go through the Oakley meadows.

She walked slowly, feeling unusually tired and languid. But soon she reached the meadows, and sat down on a stile to rest before going further.

What a pretty picture she made sitting there in the most graceful attitude, the dark green of the chestnuts forming a good background to her pale blue dress and her great white hat! Her

face was very quiet, and, but for the shadows in her eyes, might have been thought happy.

So long she sat there that twilight came on, and a little alarmed (for Miss Herne was not remarkable for physical courage) she sprang from her perch and turned homeward.

She half hoped to meet Gilbert, but as yet his figure was not to be seen, and she went through the meadow swiftly.

At the end was a gate leading into a lane; a man was leaning upon it smoking, but at the sound of her steps he turned, and, standing a little aside, held the gate open for her.

As she passed through she gave one swift glance into his face, and, bowing, thanked him for his courtesy; not with the frigid bow so ungracious, and yet so common amongst Englishwomen, but with a pretty and somewhat deep inclination of her head and a faint smile.

She wondered a little who he was. He, for his part, took up his old position, and watched the pretty graceful figure so fast disappearing down the lane.

"Strange," he said, "I should meet her in this way, on the very first day of my life here. What a nice voice she has, and what wonderful eyes! Wherein lies her great eccentricity? It is certainly strange she has no friends," and a strong desire to know her filled the young man's heart. "I believe I'm growing curious," he thought, as he threw away the end of his cigar. "I never felt greatly interested in any woman before," and he walked with quick, long strides down the grassy lane, and soon overtook Isolt and Gilbert, who had just joined her.

He passed them by, thinking, as he cast a swift glance at the brother, what a melancholy face his was—what an utter contrast to the young girl's—how much of resolution there was in her, how little in his.

"That is the polite stranger," Isolt whispered, pressing Gilbert's arm. "I wonder who and what he is!"

"Certainly not a native of Westerton, or he would not have behaved so courteously to you, Isolt."

"Oh," with a smile, "I didn't for a moment believe a native would be guilty of such refinement. He opened the gate, and stood with his hat in his hand until I had passed through. Oh! it has flashed upon me who he is—Mrs. Drew's lodger. I am sure it is he, though I only saw his head this morning."

Gilbert smiled in his melancholy way.

"And you recognized the head?"

"And shoulders," Isolt added. Then, after a pause. "Do you know, dear, this has been a very eventful day. First I had an adventure with a negro and some schoolboys, next—"

"Well, what next?" he questioned, as she paused. "The second event occurred this afternoon, I suppose?"

"Yes; Mr. Atherton came to assure me Jo should have employment, and he said—he asked—oh! Gilbert, it is so strange, following on your words so closely—but he asked me to marry him."

She blushed brightly as she spoke, and glanced timidly at her brother.

"What answer did you give him?" he questioned, after a momentary silence.

"I told him I could never be his wife, because I did not love him, and when that did not satisfy him, I said there was a secret in our family that if known would prevent any man making me his wife."

Gilbert interrupted nervously,—

"Was it well to say so much? And even did he know it, if he loved you he would marry you."

"And probably twit me with my dishonour afterwards. He is honourable enough to keep silence about our troubles. As much as he knows of it is safe with him; but he has made me angry and I do not wish to see him again."

CHAPTER II.

It was a week later, and Denis Atherton had made several attempts to win Isolt's forgiveness, but in vain. He had sent her choice flowers,

with a short, but penitent note; she returned both by the bearer, who was none other than Jo; then he had remembered a wish she once expressed for a "Gloire" bush, and selected the finest for her; but this, too, she rejected, and Jo said,—

"Ah! but missy sho'll see massen's face when him gets his presents back—it is sad as if he had lost a brudder."

Perhaps the negro's words touched her more than anything Denis could say or do; so that when she met him the following day, and he, pausing, put out his hand, she laid hers in it, feeling grieved for the pain she had inflicted.

"Miss Isolt," he said, "I know I deserved your anger, but I think it is not impossible to find an excuse for my conduct. Are we never to be friends any more? If I promise not to renew my proposals, if never by look or word I refer to that scene of a week ago, may I visit you on the old footing?"

"I shall be glad, indeed, if you will. Gilbert misses you, and we have neither friends nor acquaintance but you."

They were near her home, and touched by his humility, she asked him to go in with her, and he joyfully accepted, much to Brian Varcoe's chagrin. He was growing more interested in Isolt than he cared to think, and it did not please him to hear her name coupled with Mr. Atherton's. He set his lips, and vowed to himself he would know before another week had passed. He longed to see and hear what was passing in that pretty room, with its flowers and dainty curtains. After all, it was a very unimportant scene, or appeared so; Isolt had seated herself, but Denis stood looking down upon her.

"Miss Herne," he said, "I am going away. I would infinitely prefer staying at my own place, but the Fates won't permit it. I have accepted a long-standing invite, and start for town to-morrow, where I shall remain three weeks. I have left orders that the gardens and conservatories are entirely at your service, and Jo can bring you any fruit or flowers you may wish. Pray don't refuse to accept them," as she began to speak hurriedly. "Please remember we are friends."

"Yes," she said, "and from to-day we will not refer to the past, only tell me you have forgiven my too harsh words. I do not like to part with any anger between us, any unpardoned offence, because we cannot tell what may happen in three weeks—one of us may die."

She was touched, she was kind.

"Yes," he said, exultantly to himself, "I have got in the thick end of the wedge."

He did not stay long, and when he left Isolt was almost sorry, because he was always good to her, and his was the only friendly face that ever smiled in the pretty rooms of "No. 3."

That same evening, when she sat alone, she heard Gilbert's step, and another that was strange to her.

The next moment her brother entered the room, and with him was Mrs. Drew's lodger. Isolt rose, and a faint colour crept into her fair face, but her manner had the gracious charm of a high-born lady, as she welcomed their visitor.

"I am afraid," she said, "we can offer you very little amusement."

But Gilbert interrupted quickly,—

"Oh! Mr. Varcoe is a botanist, and it is through a similarity of tastes that we have been brought together; Mr. Rutherford effected the introduction, saying we should be mutually pleased. If you will give us a cup of tea, my dear, we will start on our expedition at once. Like myself, Varcoe's evenings only are at his disposal."

Isolt poured out tea and gave them it in dainty crimson and gold cups; then Brian said,—

"But surely you will share our ramble, Miss Herne!" and was disappointed when she said,—

"I wish I could, but it is impossible; I have a great quantity of posting to do; to-morrow my time will be my own."

"Mrs. Drew told me of your occupation," the young man rejoined coolly. "Isn't it a strange one for a girl. What made you choose it?"

"Necessity," with the suggestion of a smile. "The fact is, Mr. Varcoe, I was not accomplished

enough to be a governess, and if I had been I could not have left Gilbert. So, as I wished to earn money, he taught me book-keeping after his work at the bank was done, and I find it pays very well.

"You have not always lived at Westerton!" drinking in every line of face and form as he spoke.

"No, only for the last few years; our old home was at—in the North," with sudden, unaccountable confusion. "And we are absolutely friendless, with the exception of Mr. Atherton—oh! I might add, and his negro servant Jo."

"Oh, I've seen him," Brian remarked; "he is the man you rescued from those wretched schoolboys. Really, Miss Herne, I've wanted to explain and apologise for my ungallant conduct that morning, but I got no opportunity until this evening. The fact is, before I had recovered my surprise at your sudden appearance you had got the poor fellow blushed."

She laughed and blushed.

"I did think it would have been kinder of you to help than look on," and before he could answer, Gilbert seized his arm.

"You shall settle the dispute when we return. At present I am all impatience to be gone (botany was Gilbert's hobby), daylight won't last much longer. But when we come back Isolt shall sing to you, if you like music."

Isolt! What a pretty name it was! How admirably it suited the clear-cut face that would have been proud but for an almost indescribable expression that was not all sorrow or bitterness.

Brian was angry with himself for thinking so much of Isolt's grey eyes and so little of the ferns and flowers they gathered, and he was glad when the light grew too dim and uncertain for them to distinguish one blossom from another, and Gilbert announced regretfully that they must go home.

What a pleasant picture that dainty sitting-room made when viewed from the street! Brian, who was utterly alone in the world, felt a thrill of pain as he looked on it; the flowers were in the window, the blind was up, and through the lace curtains he saw pictures, brackets and dainty ornaments, none of them expensive, but all in good taste; at the open piano sat Isolt, her white fingers straying idly over the keys, her pretty brown head nodding time as she played. She would have risen, but Gilbert said,—

"Don't move, Isolt; Varcoe wants you to sing. Let us have your latest song, my dear!"

"Am I encroaching on your kindness, Miss Herne?" bending over her, and laying flowers and ferns before her, she shook her head.

"Not at all, Mr. Varcoe. Are these for my acceptance?"

"I shall be proud if you think them worthy," he answered with a thrill of strange, new pleasure; she rose and ringing for water arranged them in some vases, he watching every movement of her nimble fingers. Then she sat down before her instrument again, and saying,—

"I am neither an accomplished singer, nor have a powerful voice; mine is but a mezzo-soprano." She struck a few notes and began to sing "Dreaming," one of Milton Wellings's best ballads. The melancholy music rose and fell, the words throbbed as it were into Brian's heart and brain, and his eyes never left the girl's face. But unconscious of his scrutiny she sang on.

When the singer ceased Brian still stood beside her, and on his face there was a new look—he sighed a little.

"If I might come here often—," he began; and Gilbert, who had conceived a violent fancy for him, said,—

"Come every evening if you choose; we shall be glad to have you. Shall we not, Isolt?" Brian turned anxiously towards her.

"May I come, Miss Herne?"

"Certainly," she said. "I am very poor company for Gilbert; you will do him good."

He thanked them with a sigh.

"You can't imagine what it is to be a friendless, homeless fellow like me; why, I haven't a relative in the world."

"Pray, don't consider that a trial!" Isolt

interrupted, with a bitter laugh. "For my part, I think the fewer one has the better; and the man who said, 'preserve me from my friends,' was not alone in his prayer. Oh! you looked terrified! and I suppose you prepared for anything queer in my speech and ways. Of course, Mrs. Drew has told you what the natives call me!"

He answered confusedly he had.

"Pray, feel no embarrassment on my account," with a suspicion of mockery in her eyes. "I am accustomed to my name now," with the greatest sang froid.

After that night Brian was often seen at "No. 3," and before he knew it he had given his first and best love to the girl they called eccentric.

She puzzled him often. One day she would be indifferent, even to coldness; another she was cordial—welcomed him in her pretty, frank way.

There was no rival in the field. Atherton was away, and Brian determined to make the most of his opportunity. They talked together; sang, rowed and walked. Sometimes Gilbert joined them, sometimes they went alone.

One evening in early June, they went through the Berrydown meadows, and Isolt was unusually gentle. She talked in low tones—made no bitter little speeches; and the young man's heart leapt within him for very joy.

He gathered wild roses, wet with dew and half-closed, and, cutting away the thorns, gave them to her. She would always remember that evening, because in her darker days it would stand out so bright—so cruel a contrast.

They sat down on a grassy knoll; and Isolt, looking up, saw the nests of myriad rooks in the trees above her head, and drew Brian's attention to them.

Together they listened to the faint hum of the gnats, becoming each moment fainter as the twilight deepened; saw the little clouds sail over the clear sky; heard the far-away song of the sailors in the bay scarce a stone's throw from where they sat, and the indescribable murmur of the sea.

Neither was willing to break the pleasant silence, and the girl had suddenly grown conscious of a great yearning towards this man beside her; but as yet the fear that came with her love was almost sweet.

"I wish," Brian said at last, "this sort of thing could go on for ever; but the last month has sped so quickly that it seems my stay at Westerton will be over before I realise I am beyond the beginning of it."

"Don't speak of going!" Isolt said, and he was glad her voice grew tremulous. "Gilbert will miss you sorely."

"And you?" bending over her—"shall you not miss me a little! Am I so unhappy as not to have won your friendship?"

She toyed with her roses.

"Yes, I shall feel I have lost a pleasant companion, whose loss cannot be easily supplied—at least in Westerton. Then you will go your way, and I mine. At first you may regret the parting, and I may be lonely in the long evenings when Gilbert stays late at the bank. After that we shall forget, or remember only at odd and rare intervals." She paused and sighed; but Brian said, gravely,—

"I don't think your view of the case is a correct one; and I wish you would not contract the habit of saying unnecessarily bitter things. Old memories are the clearest and the dearest."

"So I have found you at last!" cried Gilbert's voice close by. "Don't you think it imprudent, Isolt, to sit on the grass after the dew has begun to fall?"

She rose confusedly.

"Perhaps it is. Let us go home."

The trio walked on through the gloaming, but the girl was very quiet. She listened, too, without understanding Gilbert's and Brian's talk on botany. Their voices sounded very far away and indistinct. In her heart was the wild cry,—

"I love him—I love him!—and, oh! what can my love bring me but misery? Oh, Heaven! how can I tell him all? How bear to see his scorn and loathing!"

When they entered the sitting-room they found some letters lying upon the table. There were two in the same handwriting; one for Gilbert and one for Isolt.

The brother, too intent upon his grasses and weeds to care for correspondence of any kind, sorted out the rarer specimens of that evening's gathering; but the girl took up her letter and suddenly cried out in her anguish,—

"Oh, Heaven! Oh, Heaven; this is too cruel!"

Gilbert started and moved towards her, but Brian was first. He threw an arm about her, because she was ghastly and looked as though she would fall.

"What is it, Isolt?" the brother questioned; and as his eyes fell upon the letter in her hand he in his turn grew white and trembled.

Isolt twisted herself from Brian's arm.

"Let me be!" she moaned. "Do not touch me, for pity's sake!" I have had a terrible shock!"

He wondered how she could know that letter contained bad news when she had not even broken the seal; but he said nothing, and she sank upon the couch, moaning and shivering, as if in bodily anguish.

Gilbert stood by her, and laid his thin hands on her bowed head.

"Hush, darling," he said, pitifully—"don't break down. You have always been my comfort. I want your help now."

The words, although they sounded selfish, were not so, being spoken only with a view to bracing Isolt's nerves to the inevitable trouble before them.

She lifted her sad face and spoke in a strange, dull way to Brian.

"You must forgive me, Mr. Varcoe. I did not mean to display so much vulgar feeling." Her grey eyes were wide with anguish as she added, "Do not think me inhospitable, or that Gilbert and I do not value your friendship, but it would be a relief to us now to be alone."

He took her little trembling hand in his.

"I am not likely to misconstrue your words," gravely, "and please remember I am wholly at your command, and I hope you will find your letter conveys good news."

"That handwriting," she said, pointing towards the envelope, which had fallen to the floor, "never brought joy to any. For your sympathy we thank you. To-morrow we shall be ready again to receive you. Good-bye!"

She did not draw her hand from his, and in her eyes there was a passionate appealing, as if for help. He bent very low over her.

"Remember," he said, "my greatest joy would be to do you service."

Then at last brother and sister were alone, and Gilbert's courage failed him. He sank into a chair.

"Read the cursed things—I can't!" and Isolt rose to the occasion.

Her voice did not rise above a whisper, and now and again she looked round, as if fearing some listener. When she had ended, Gilbert laid his hand on hers.

"Heaven grant he may not return to us. Heaven grant he may die before!"

He paused, knowing there was no need to say more.

The girl shivered. Her brother's prayer had so often been her own; but she broke out, harshly,—

"What use is it to appeal to Heaven! Oh, Heaven! things have been cruel so long! and now—now, just when I have a glimpse of happiness, and can, for a while, forget my misery, a darker cloud comes over us. If he comes here! Oh! say, what shall we do?—how hide our secret longer! Everyone will learn it—everyone will shun us, save Mr. Atherton, perhaps; and—and Mr. Varcoe will be angry that he made overtures to us."

Something in her voice, her face, roused the brother.

"You unhappy child," he said, drawing her to him, "has that been added to your burden! Do you love this man?"

She made no answer, only clung closer to him, and hid her face upon his shoulder, whilst he

passed his hand caressingly, pitifully, over her pretty hair.

"Isolt, have you any grounds to believe he returns your—your affection?"

"He faked!" she answered, fiercely. "I may not ask—I dare not hope—for love from him! Oh! if he knew all he would shrink away from me. Gilbert, I can't tell him all. I would rather tell any man than him."

She did not cry, she did not sob. Sorrow and shame had so long been her daily portion that she rarely wept to think of it now. But to-night she had been so happy, had forgotten everything but her love, so that the blow she had received was doubly cruel.

But in the morning, when Brian Varcoe called, she was calm and even cheerful.

"I'm afraid I quite startled you last night," she said, apologetically. "You will greatly oblige me by forgetting my curious conduct."

Something like doubts of her stirred the young man's heart. Why should she be so anxious that he should forget!—and why should the sight of a man's bold handwriting make her tremble and grow pale with fear?

Had she a lover unknown to him? Because of his doubts his manner was constrained, and the wretched girl asked her heart,—

"Has he discovered anything?" and wore a confused look, that increased Brian's doubts and fears.

But the young man had given her his honest love, and in the evening he went again to "number three," this time to find Denis Atherton a guest.

Gilbert introduced the two, and they regarded each other with an unspoken, but very palpable animosity.

Denis thought, "This fellow, then, is the cause of the change in Isolt!" and hated him.

Brian said,—

"He is a rival!" and all that evening would not quit the girl's side. But he had an engagement at ten, and was compelled, therefore, to leave the field to Denis, who showed no sign of going, although Isolt yawned and professed great weariness.

Gilbert went to the front door with Brian and then hurried off to a little room, where he classified and pressed his flowers; so that Mr. Atherton and Isolt were alone.

The former took immediate advantage of the position.

"Miss Herne," he said, vexedly, "what does that fellow do here? What does he mean by dropping in at any hour, and staying such an unaccountable time?"

Isolt lifted languid eyes to his.

"Really, Mr. Atherton, your conduct amuses me, because the same questions might be asked of you. Mr. Varcoe is Gilbert's friend and mine, and in this house we do not intend he should be insulted."

The quietude of her manner angered him more than any passionate display of feeling.

"Look here, Isolt!" he cried almost coarsely. "I have sworn to make you my wife, and I will not go from my word! I love you with all my soul—with all my life!—and the man who comes between us will find he has a dangerous rival to deal with!"

Miss Herne rose.

"Because you love, or fancy you love me, you presume to dictate and threaten. Really, Mr. Atherton, you are an honour to your race! I told you not long since I could not marry you, and now I do, even where I am other girls. Now I tell you your present conduct is that of a clown, a rustic; and I shall be glad if you will cease visiting here."

"Are you afraid of Varcoe's jealousy?"

"I will come again and again! The town shall ring with our names coupled together! My dear—my pretty lass!—say you have been jesting! Don't drive me mad with your gibes and sneers! I love you with all my heart, but I would murder you rather than see you another man's wife! Isolt, my darling, listen to me!"

The clear pallor of her face was tinged with faintest pink.

"Your manner offends me," she said, coldly.

"If you will not consent to behave as a gentleman I shall ring for Gilbert."

Her steady hand was ready to carry out her promise, but with a sudden movement Denis seized the white fingers in his.

"I will say what I intend saying first!" he cried, fiercely. "To-night I came after an absence of three weeks. How did you welcome me? With frigid bow and faint smile. I hoped my absence would prove me necessary to your happiness; but no sooner had I gone from Berrydown than this stranger, whom nobody knows—this immaculate Brian Varcoe—takes my place; teaches you forgetfulness and dislike of me; and by Heaven he shall suffer! If you think I shall stand tamely by whilst he wins what I covet and have striven for, you have formed a poor idea of my character. Isolt! oh, my dear—my dear—be kind to me. Save me from my own passions! Before I knew you I was no worse than other fellows—now I am a murderer at heart."

He dropped her hands and tried to catch her to him; but she was swifter than he, and so escaped the threatened embrace. Her voice was clear and cold as she answered,—

"I thought in these days a woman had some right to choose her husband. From your words I gather I am mistaken. But I will tell you candidly, Denis Atherton—had I no past—were I free from grief and—and shame, and you the highest noble in the land—the most perfect man, I would not marry you! Oh, you would be last of all that I could choose; but you need have no fear of rivalry. Mr. Varcoe has shown me no preference—neither has he threatened me. Of the two I prefer his friendship to your love!"

"You think to deceive me!" furiously; "but I see through all your juggling; and if you do not marry me no other man shall call you wife!"

A sinister light shone in his blue eyes, and his face was deathly pale with passion and hatred of his rival.

"This is amusing," Miss Herne said, as if to herself, although her heart trembled with fear. "What an ornament you would have been to the stage—a model villain—a picturesque bandit!"

She could not stay the mocking words—perhaps she had no desire then to do so; but Denis sprang to her side.

"Someone shall suffer for this!" he said, speaking low now because of the intensity of his rage; "and as for you, Isolt—you will marry me, and learn to be content. You cannot escape me. I have never been thwarted by any man, and surely a woman is powerless to oppose me?"

She smiled contemptuously.

"Woman's wit has often proved too much for man's strength," she said, quietly.

Then before he knew what she was about to do she clashed the bell, and he stood silent and defeated before her.

"Lizzie," when the girl appeared, "show Mr. Atherton out!"

He bit his lips with rage, and in pausing her said,—

"Let Varcoe take care!"

"He is perfectly able to protect himself against open assaults!" she retorted, with gallant cheerfulness.

And so they parted—the young squire to stride homewards, with dark face and brooding eyes; the girl to take up a novel, and seemingly find pleasure in it.

The bright days wore by; and Atherton, having cut himself off from "number three," grew morose, and blamed anybody but himself for his fault.

Now and again he met his rival in the street; but no word passed between the men, since Denis had given Brian the cut direct; only their glances were masterpieces of hate and scorn.

And Mr. Varcoe was seen every day at "number three." One lovely evening early in July he sat with the brother and sister. The lamp was lit, but the blinds not down, and the three were only screened from the observation of casual passers-by by the plants in the window, which were Isolt's special care.

They spoke of many and indifferent things, and their tones were so low that one at least

of the trio could hear the faintest sound peculiar to summer nights. She heard something more—the stealthy tread of a human foot.

"Listen, Gilbert!" she said, nervously, "there is some one in the garden!"

The window was open, and her words passed out into the night. Gilbert rose and looked out, but seeing no intruder went back to his seat saying,—

"You are fanciful, Isolt—no one is there."

But the girl was unconvinced, and glanced now and again towards the window apprehensively. Suddenly Gilbert rose.

"I must go out, Isolt. I quite forgot to give Nestley, the bank manager, a note from Mr. Skelsey. He has gone to town, and it is important Nestley should have the message to-night. As my sister is so nervous perhaps you will kindly stay with her until my return, Varcoe!"

The latter readily promised to do so; and Gilbert hurried out into the night.

Brian drew his chair nearer to Isolt, and began to talk of his past life, and his present loneliness, in low tones, and in his eyes there was a look the girl could not misunderstand.

"I am far from rich," he said, "and depend solely upon my own exertions for a livelihood; but with courage and perseverance one may do much. You think a woman might safely venture to cast in lots with me!"

Before Isolt could reply she was conscious of a pair of eyes looking fixedly at her, and, glancing fearfully towards the window, saw a face pressed close to it.

"Oh!" she shrieked, "that face! that face!" and clung to Brian, almost unconscious that she did so.

Comprehending at once that someone had been looking in upon them, he gently loosed her hands, and prepared to rush into the garden, and if possible capture the intruder, who was probably a tramp.

But Isolt clung convulsively to him.

"Oh! do not—do not leave me! I am afraid to be alone! For pity's sake stay!"

He felt somewhat vexed, and answered, quickly,—

"You are perfectly safe, Miss Isolt. There is nothing here to harm you, and I will not go beyond the garden."

But, shivering on her knees, still clasping one of his hands, with her white face uplifted, she entreated,—

"Oh! do not go! It was a cruel, wicked face! The man may be armed—he may have companions! For your own sake stay here!"

Her anxiety for his safety was very pleasant to him, and his heart beat high. He forgot all but her presence and her fears, which had not been entirely for herself.

"I will stay," he said, softly; and, lifting her from her knees, placed her upon a couch.

But her terror was not spent. She lay shivering with hidden face, and seemed incapable of further speech. He bent low over her,—

"Miss Herne—Isolt—there is really no need for fear. Do you doubt my power to protect you if there were?"

She murmured something he could not hear; and he bent his face so low it almost touched her pretty hair.

"The cruel eyes!" in a dreadful whisper.

"Oh, Heaven! oh, Heaven! those cruel eyes!"

Her fear seemed a little unreasonable to Brian; but he argued with himself that men do not understand a woman's delicate and highly-strung organisation, and because of his love was very patient and pitiful.

He lifted her a little, and kept his arm about her pretty form. She was hardly conscious in her misery of his touch, and he knew that

"Isolt," his familiarity was not strange to her.—"Is there no one you would choose to spend the night with you? You are quite unfit to be alone. Let me send Mrs. Drew to you."

"No, no!" eagerly. "I am less frightened now; and Gilbert will soon be home. Don't tell him of my fright—it was very stupid of me to be so easily scared."

And, blushing, she released herself from his arm. Suddenly she turned to him,—

"You have been good to me always—my first and best friend; and if I do not seem to thank you as I should it is because my heart is too full for much speech; but there is something in my mind to-night I must say to you. Perhaps the time is very near when you will learn I have not been quite open with you—I have not told you all that I should, and when that day comes I pray you to remember how very often I made the effort and failed, and how at last I felt I would rather die than tell my sad story to you."

"But why," Brian asked, "will you not confide in me? Am I unworthy of your trust?"

"No," she answered, shivering still; "but I am unwilling to forego your friendship until it is impossible to retain it longer. We are very lonely—Gilbert and I—and are not great favourites with the people here. At least let us retain your esteem while we may. In November you will leave Westerton; and it will be less hard to bear your scorn when you are away than whilst you are daily meeting us in street or field."

He was sorely puzzled; but he said,—"Is Gilbert implicated in the story, or does it concern yourself only?"

"He suffers too," she answered, wearily. "Through the fault of another his whole life is blighted. Oh, Mr. Varcoe, you have seen him only as he is now—reserved, melancholy, hopeless; but there was a time when he was different. Five years ago the blow came that robbed him of all he most prized. He was engaged then to a girl who seemed devoted to him, and they were on the eve of marriage."

"When our trouble fell upon us he went to her and told her all, offering her her freedom if she wished it. Acting on the advice of her friends she accepted it, and so crushed out any joy, or hope of joy, that might have remained in his heart."

"We came away from all we knew, and for five years it has been our endeavour to hide ourselves from old friends, old acquaintances—to forget the old life, with its myriad associations and pleasures. How far we have succeeded you know."

"Tell me," and his voice sounded strangely hoarse, "is the secret a shameful one?"

"Yes," she answered, and covered her eyes. "Do not ask more—I can tell you nothing further!"

There was a short silence. Then Brian Varcoe said,—"I cannot believe the disgrace is yours, Isolt; I am ready to stake my life on your purity and innocence."

And before he could say more she cried out,—"Oh! Heaven bless you! Heaven bless you for those words!" and, hearing Gilbert's returning steps, roused herself, and strove to meet him cheerfully.

He looked at her with anxious eyes. "Well, my dear, have you recovered your fright? Ah! I see you have; but you will give Mr. Varcoe a very poor idea of your courage."

He smiled faintly, and sat down beside her; but she said nothing of the face she had seen at the window; and when Brian rose to go she whispered,—"Remember, you are to say nothing to Gilbert."

"Your will is my law."

He glanced round, and saw Gilbert intent upon his herbarium, and, lifting her hand to his lips, kissed it once, whilst the hot colour flooded her face and brow.

So he left her, and Gilbert went with him to the door.

"It is a lovely night!" he said. "If Isolt were not so nervous I would beg you to walk through the meadows. Who was that, Varcoe?" as a dark figure passed the gate swiftly, and turned the corner of the street.

"I don't know; but I fancy it was a tramp, and he seemed to be hiding behind the laurels. I think it would be as well, Herve, to keep your blinds down in future; your pretty rooms may impress the light-fingered gentry with a sense of wealth."

Then he creased to his lodgings, and went slowly up to his room. He was restless that

night—sorely troubled in his mind about Isolt. He loved her purely and unselfishly; but he was not prepared to marry her if the shame she had spoken of was of her own working.

A father's or a brother's sin could not detract from her worth if she herself wore his ideal woman; but his wife must be *sans peur et sans reproche*.

In the middle of the night he rose, and, looking from his window, saw her light yet burning.

Ah! if he could have seen that writhing form upon the little white bed—have heard the terrible, half-strangled sobs that broke from her poor pale lips!

Would he have yearned to comfort her, or would his heart turn from her—its vague fears grown into awful certainty!

"Oh, Heaven!" the unhappy girl moaned, "Oh, Heaven! what shall I do! That he should come back—and now! I could have borne it better two months ago! Oh! Isolt! Isolt! to drift into this cruel love! Why could I not go on without a thought or care for any save Gilbert!"

The beautiful dawn came at last, and found her spent with anguish, pale and heavy-eyed—too weary to moan or cry longer. She hid her face in her pillow and tried to get a little rest; but no sleep would come to her.

So after awhile she rose, drew up her blind, and then lay watching the fleeting tints in the early morning sky.

The hours passed by. Lizzie was astir, and it was time she roused herself; so she dressed her pretty hair with deft fingers that did not tremble, and fastened white lace about her throat; then went down and took her place at the breakfast-table, greeting Gilbert with a kiss and a faint smile.

When he remarked on her pallor she answered quietly she had not slept all night, and wakefulness was not conducive to roses.

He had been gone about an hour, when Lizzie brought her a letter directed in the same writing as that which had once frightened her. She broke the seal and read:—

"Dwan Isolt.—You must meet me to-morrow—anywhere—all places are alike to me; but if you refuse I shall come to the house, which I guess you wouldn't like. Bring all the cash you can, as I am hard up. If you refuse it will be bad for you; and surely after so long an absence you are anxious to see your loving

CHAPTER III.

BRIAN VARCOE sat in his own room, an open letter before him. The writer had signed himself "a friend" and the letter concerned Isolt.

On ordinary occasions the young man would have laughed scornfully, and torn the paper into a hundred pieces, because he knew anonymous epistles are usually the shelter of sneaks and liars—the devil's own instruments.

But there had been much that was strange in Miss Herne's conduct since the night when she had seen the face at the window.

Once or twice Brian had met her quite late in the evening coming from the Berrydown meadows, which formed a part of his rival's estate.

She always said she had been on the cliffs, and stayed longer than she intended; but her manner had been so agitated, her face so white and frightened, that Brian's suspicions were aroused.

He sat looking at the ominous lines.

"It seems a mean thing to 'play the spy upon a girl, but my love must be my excuse; and if I prove her true and pure—as I believe her—why, then, I will confess all to her, and win her pardon."

He shook his clenched hand at the innocent paper.

By Heaven! if it is a life somebody shall win he had never been born!

This was the substance of the note:—

"If Mr. Varcoe will walk to the Berrydown cliffs on Friday night he will see something that will astonish him, and shake his faith in women."

Miss Herne—the immaculate and eccentric—is in the habit of meeting a lover there every other evening at 8.30. The way is lonely, the passers-by are few, and the trees afford ample shelter for the fond pair from the eye of any curious intruder. If the lover were presentable, or in any way a man, he would not compromise the young lady's good name by these clandestine meetings; and if Mr. Varcoe would be happy in his wife let him pay some attention to the warning of—"A FRIEND."

It was Wednesday night. Would that the morrow were Friday! Once Brian started up, resolved to seek an explanation from Isolt; but prudence restrained him, and he spent that evening alone.

But the following day he crossed to "number three," and found the girl very busy, but looking pale and ill. The part he had set himself to play was loathsome to him, and he would find a way out of it if possible. So he sat down by Isolt.

"I've a proposition to make, and a favour to ask."

She turned her weary white face towards him, and smiled faintly.

"I would say the first is carried and the second granted, but that I know how exorbitant your demands are, Mr. Varcoe!"

"That is unkind, especially as I can deny each of the 'soft impeachments.' My proposal is that we shall all take a holiday to-morrow evening; the favour I ask—that you, with Gilbert, will let me scull you as far as Nettlefold. It is only a three-mile trip, you know."

For just a moment Isolt's face flushed with pleasure, then it grew pale again, and a strange expression—half of fear, half of entreaty—came into her eyes. "I should like it above all things," tremulously, "but I am unable to accept your offer. Gilbert, however, will gladly accompany you."

The suspicion and jealousy in Brian's heart began to take tangible form.

"Will you tell me, Miss Herne, why you cannot go?"—his voice was hard, and the line of his lips very firm—almost cruel, Isolt thought.

"I—I have a prior engagement," she stammered, and his face grew darker. He was so honest, so candid himself, he hated anything like deceit in others. The girl saw his changed expression, and grew sick at heart. "You must not think badly of me. By your face I know you are tempted to do so. I—I cannot help myself. Oh! Mr. Varcoe, at least do me the justice to believe I am not a free agent."

"You are going," he said in low, stern tones, "to keep an assignation? Who is this man, Isolt?"

"I cannot tell you," wringing her hands; "would to Heaven I could! the secret is killing me."

He interrupted her swiftly,—"Is he an old lover, to whom you have been false?—or is it Atherton, who is richer and better born than I? If an old lover, tell me. Upon my soul, Isolt, I am willing to overlook your past, if you will lay your hands in mine and tell me you have no cause for shame."

She broke into passionate weeping.

"Don't ask anything of me; I dare not answer. One thing only will I say—it is true I have met a man secretly; and it is equally true I cannot help myself."

"You mean," idly, "you are in his power. Will you tell me the nature of that power, or is it presumption in me to ask? Perhaps I over-estimate the privileges of friendship."

She wrung her hands in her bitter anguish.

"Oh, spare me!" she cried; "if you knew all you would pity me. I am like the fly in a spider's web; I can neither turn or free myself. Oh! for Heaven's sake, think as kindly of me as you can, for heart and courage alike are failing me."

"Isolt," he said, and his strong, true voice, that until now had only spoken tenderly to her, was harsh. "I have been vain enough to believe you were not indifferent to me; I have sometimes ventured so far as to hope you loved me. That you are more to me than any other woman I frankly confess, but until this mystery is cleared

up I will not see you again of my own will, or hold any communication with you. My honour is so dear to me I dare not now offer you my name, lest it should suffer. But if at some future time you can make plain all that is now so strange in you; if—"

He broke off there, but suddenly resumed. "Oh, Heaven! Why will you not speak and end our misery?" but only her heavy sobs answered him; and she did not once glance at the dark, handsome face, so haggard and stricken. He crossed and stood beside her. "My dear," he said, and suddenly his deep voice grew tender, "tell me all. If it is some girlish folly that shadows your life I shall not be a hard judge; if you can assure me there is no blot upon your name I will believe your simple word and ask no proof."

She sank upon the couch, crying bitterly; his kindness was more than she could bear.

He knelt by her and took her pretty hands in his.

"Darling!" he whispered, "give me the right to love and protect you."

And all in a moment she cried out,—
"Go away! oh! go away; you break my heart!"

But still he held her hands fast, and still his breath stirred the wavy masses of her beautiful hair. The touch of his hand, the sound of his voice, full of entreating love, made her very weak, and in that moment she forgot all reticence, all pride.

"If I did not love you so dearly it might be I should accept the gift you offer, and give you some false explanation of my grief. My misery is that loving you I dare not tell you anything of my story, for my own sake. Your anger is hard to bear, but your scorn would kill me."

Still he pleaded as he knelt beside her,—

"Is there anything save actual and personal shame my love would not cancel? Love, love! am I so poor a creature you dare not trust me! You have confessed I am dear to you. Oh! then, for your own sake, if not for mine, give me a lover's, a husband's rights."

At that she started up,—

"Go, go! There can never be any union between you and me; let the past be forgotten, and if in the future you can forgive the pain I have caused you I shall be glad—Heaven only knows how glad! I would like to keep your friendship, only for this—that friendship is impossible where love has been, and it may be that soon you will hate my very name. At least absolve me of any effort to win your heart—let me be blameless in this; and if—if it is not too hard a thing for you to do, I should be glad if you would not hold aloof from Gilbert; he is lonely. You understand him. For his sake, and—perhaps for mine—do not quite forget what has been fair and good, if only for a little while."

As her voice died out wallingly Brian rose; his soul was heavy with her guilt, and his voice was so low, so strained, she hardly caught his words.

"You ask impossible things. I could not bear daily to meet you, knowing what has passed between us, and how vain all has been. If you had only warned me early—as you women so well understand doing—if you had only given me the slightest hint of this absent and not-to-be-seen lover, I would have held aloof, being well aware of my danger. Was it for gratification of your beauty you first suffered me to love you! Do you not realise that men's lives have been wrecked again and again to gratify a woman's caprice—a woman's unsatiable desire for conquest! But you—you who seemed so far removed from folly and coquetry; you for whom I thought nothing too high, nothing too holy; how could you do this thing, and kill my faith in good women! Oh, Heaven! when I think what you have been to me, what you are—"

"Don't think," she cried, her voice grown shrill with pain; "to think is madness. Have I not spent whole nights in thought and weeping, and has it availed me anything! Whatever I am, or whatever the circumstances of my life, may make me, hear me speak honestly, candidly. Perhaps it is the last time I shall ever open my

mind to you; perhaps we may never speak together thus, alone, face to face, again. With my whole soul I love you, and my passion is the one good thing in a life all shame and grief. If by giving up the joy that may remain to me I could secure your happiness, I should be above all women blest and glad. Now,"—with gentle hands putting him away—"now leave me, I have no further control over myself. Go—go—go! Oh, Brian! my love! my love!" and covered her miserable eyes; and, when he would not leave her, said, in tremulous tones, "there is an obstacle between us no love, no faith, can remove; there is a stain upon my name so black you would shudder at the thought of marrying me if you knew all."

And then he rose,—

"Is this man your husband?"

"No," she answered, and laughed shrilly;

"Thank Heaven, I am spared that anguish."

Her face wore a strange look, and Brian, with the awful fear in his heart each moment growing greater, said,—

"This is very dreadful; I did not think I should live to hear you exult in your shame."

The hot colour flushed her face, and her eyes blazed. She seemed about to speak, but the words died on her trembling lips, and he had moved to the door.

Here he stood one moment, and she crept, sobbing, to his side. "Brian," she whispered, "I am not guilty so—not in the awful way you think; and would have touched him, only he drew back. 'Won't you say good-bye!' she implored, 'won't you accord a little mercy to one whose life is all pain! Do you know you have never kissed me! Kiss me now; and then—and then—we will part for ever, or meet only as casual acquaintances!'"

Oh! how his heart yearned towards her, how his love almost overcame his wisdom and his pride. In that moment all harshness left his face and voice; he only felt that she was dearer to him than aught else the world could give. He threw his arms about her and strained her to him; he kissed her hair, her brow, her lips; and she! oh! the poor girl! she clung to him as if she defied even death to part them; clasped her slim, white hands about his neck, and showed him plainly in that hour all that he was to her.

They could not speak, for speech was lost in feeling; they only knew they loved, and "that loving they must part." The slow minutes wore on, the clock upon the mantel gave out the hour; they neither heard nor heeded; outside the sun was shining in all its glory; the bees were deep in the hearts of the flowers; the sultry air was heavy with the perfume of heliotrope, magnolia, and rose; the birds kept up a ceaseless conversation among the trees, and high up in the deep blue heavens, so high that he could scarce be distinguished, a lark carolled out a happy song.

Away and away stretched green meadows and undulating corn-fields; here and there the Berrydown cliffs, with their swarms of gulls, showed white against green pasture and blue sky.

But what were all these things to them? From the far distance came the strange "brood" of the sea upon the little shingly beach, and in the street children's voices laughed and chattered, until at last they roused Isolt from her stupor.

"Oh, Heaven!" she cried in terrible tones, "if I could be a child again! a little child, whose life is laughter and love!" and then she clung convulsively to Brian. "My dear!" how faint her voice had grown, "my dear, you must leave me now; if I linger the whole day over our parting, it will come with the evening. There is no help for us, oh! my heart! no help! Do kiss me and say good-bye."

She lifted her lips to his, and his face was drawn and ghastly. He dared not trust himself to speak; he only laid his lips to hers, and kissed her once; then unclasping her hands from about his neck he went out, leaving her lonely, and staggered like a drunken man across to his lodgings.

And she!—oh! pity her! pity her! as she writhed and moaned in her anguish. She had locked her door and drawn her blinds, and now she lay prostrate upon the floor, with hidden

face, and arms flung wide above her head. She had no word to say, her woe had made her dumb, but there was an awful cry in her heart, a passionate prayer, that surely was as real as any spoken petition.

Once, when the lark's song drew nearer and swelled out jubilantly, loudly, she lifted her wan face, and in her eyes there was a wonder that nature did not share her grief—a sort of questioning horror that any creature could be glad.

Then the pretty head sank low again, and the wavy masses of hair fell unbound and lay upon the bright roses in the carpet, flooded her shoulders, rippling in all their profusion below the slender waist. The nails pierced her delicate palms, but she felt no physical pain; if one had struck her she scarce had heeded it. Suddenly she sat erect, and in that moment found voice to cry aloud,—

"Heaven forgive him! for I never can! I never can! Oh, my broken heart! my ruined life! Oh, Heaven! oh, Heaven!"

What hour was it? Mechanically she looked towards the clock; it was almost time for Gilbert's return. She rose, drew up the blinds, not daring to look towards Brian's windows; then, unlocking the door, went to her room, and did her poor best to remove all traces of tears and agitation. She coiled the wavy masses of her hair low down upon her neck, and drew the little rings of hair lower upon her brow; she put on her prettiest dress, which had in it the faintest suggestion of pink, and so cast a slight tinge of colour over her pallid face; and then she went down to meet Gilbert, trying to smile, only the poor lips refused to do her will, and the eyes would not be party even to such an innocent deception as she planned.

The brother took the small white face between his hands.

"Dear, what has happened?"

She was silent for a moment while she struggled with her tears; then she said,—

"It is only a fresh chapter in the story, Gilbert; I have denied myself again and again. I have tried to do my duty; oh! how cruel a duty it is! To-day Mr. Varcoe has asked me to marry him—and—and—oh! you know what my answer was. And in sending him away I have spoiled my whole life, and given up every chance of happiness. My poor Gilbert! I should not complain; your lot is as hard as my own! Like one in an ancient story I could say, 'Come, let us weep together,' only tears and prayers are of no avail," bitterly.

"Poor little woman!" gently, "did Brian Varcoe ask the reason of your refusal?"

"He asked many questions, and I could not answer them clearly, so that he believes hard things of me. Now, my dear, my dear, you must be, if possible, kinder than ever to me, because there is none to love me but you." She laid her aching head upon his shoulder, and clung about him almost piteously. "Gilbert," she murmured, in a monotonous tone, "I wonder what will be the end of it all?—if we shall travel through life together always miserable, always under a cloud! Should one of us die before the other, what will the survivor do!" then, at the added melancholy on his face, she roused herself to a semblance of brightness.

"After all, Gilbert, things might be infinitely worse; we might have to bear poverty as well as disgrace; or we might have to suffer separation—and that would be insupportable."

He leaned forward, and spoke in a whisper,—
"Isolt, do you think *he* will come to us here?"

Just a quivering of her eyelids, just a tremor of the lips, and she answered, slowly,—

"We will hope not. Perhaps, dear, if he is sufficiently bribed he will not trouble us; and trust me I will spare you, if I can, the misery of meeting him again—poor, poor Gilbert!"

(Continued on page 400.)

CHRONIC INDIGESTION and its attendant Misery and Suffering Cured with Tonic "Docron" (purely vegetable), 2/6, from Chemists, 3/-, post free from Dr. Horn, "Glendower," Bournemouth. Sample bottle and pamphlet, with Analytical Reports, &c., 6 Stamps.

THE JEALOUS SISTER.

—102—

CHAPTER XIV.

PHYLLIS was exuberant over her prospects, despite the fact that she fully comprehended her husband's base motives in placing her thus. But she knew she could trust Hilda's aversion to him to thwart all his plans.

"Isn't this a piece of luck! You and I will go shopping to-morrow, Hilda!" she cried, with joy. "Only think of getting a thousand pounds out of the stingy old chap to spend! Why last autumn he would not let me have a pound to get a new cloak! But I shall have a good time at last. I only wish he were going to stay in the country and let me have my fling, as he calls it, all by myself."

Mrs. Stuart was quite shocked, and timidly counselled economy.

"If he gives you all that money, you should try to save some of it against the time when he takes another stingy fit," she observed, remembering last summer and the boarders.

Phyllis gave a wild laugh, and answered, recklessly:

"I shall certainly put by enough of it to enable me to secure a divorce from him some day."

"Oh, my dear, don't talk such nonsense!" entreated her mother.

"It's dead earnest, mamma, dear. Oh, you don't know him as I do—you don't know how cruel and brutal he can be. And sometimes I fear him, and believe he would like to see me dead, so that he might court Hilda again," mirthlessly.

"Hush, Phil, I will not listen to such foolish words. You know I despise him, and only received him here to-day for mamma's sake and yours. But it must be an understood thing that future calls from him will be objectionable," said Hilda, firmly, with flashing eyes.

"That will suit me well. I can pay my visits alone," returned Phyllis, well pleased at this shock she had in reserve for her husband. "And now," she added, dismissing the subject, "come and show me all through this palace, Hilda."

"But, Phil, it's as cold as a barn, for of course we are not keeping fires in all the rooms. And the furniture and carpets and pictures are all wrapped up."

"We can rip some of the wrapping off and get a peep at the fine things," persisted Phyllis, whose curiosity was one of her ruling passions.

"And you forget there is always a fire kept in the music-room on account of the grand piano, Hilda," said her mother.

"And I have the impudence to practise on it every day, so I am keeping up my music finely," laughed Hilda.

She led Phyllis through the beautiful, spacious halls, and smiled at her expressions of envy and admiration.

"Oh, if I had such a house and a fortune to enable me to live in it! That is what I always dreamed of in my plans for marrying well!" she cried. "Oh, Hilda, what a magnificent great big library! And there must be thousands of books! But I don't care for reading. One misses too much of the rush of gay life poring over books. I wonder whose portraits those are so carefully done up!"

"Probably the family's, as they correspond in number—there are Mr. Penfold, his wife, son and daughter."

"Oh, and are the last two married?"

"No; the daughter is a beauty—only eighteen, and I fancy the son is a cranky old bachelor. He has his own suite of rooms here closely locked, and permits no one to enter them."

"The wretch! I hope the moths may eat his carpets! And I'm going to peep into his rooms some day as sure as I live. But come, I'm going to step on this table and uncover the pictures. We can do them up again, you know."

Snatching the action to the words, she stripped the wrapping from the frames, commenting on each vivaciously:

"Humph! paterfamilias, of course. Looks the

plutocrat to the life, does he not? This must be mamma. Oh, my, how grand! Regular swell, isn't she! Here's the daughter. Bud of sixteen, all in white. Now this must be the cranky old bachelor. Good gracious!" and she leaped from the table to the floor in her boundless surprise. "Oh, Hilda, Hilda! however did Paul Denver get into that frame! Isn't it life-like and handsome! Can he be the son of the family!"

"Of course not, Phil, as Penfold is the family name. He must be related to them, as Bertha Manners is their cousin. Or—or—perhaps he is Rose's lover!" stammered Hilda, trembling with surprise, and sinking into a chair.

Phyllis, glancing at her face, saw that she was pale and unnerved, and exclaimed, tauntingly:

"You seem excited! Are you still in love with that fellow!"

"Phyllis, how vulgar you can be when you choose! You were as much in love with him as anybody!" flashed Hilda, spiritedly.

"Oh, I don't deny it! He was magnificent, wasn't he? I could die for such a man!" laughed Phyllis, gazing up at the splendid life-like portrait with frank admiration, and continuing in her feather-brained way: "I certainly did my best to win him, and am only sorry that I didn't succeed. Oh, how I hated you when he brought you to the picnic that day! I thought you had won him from us all, and I was so glad it turned out only a flirtation!"

Every seemingly careless word pierced Hilda's heart like an arrow, with the memory of that night when Paul Denver's trifling had turned all her joy to sorrow with a few cruel phrases.

Yet to look at the handsome, pictured face no one would have believed that Paul Denver had an ignoble nature.

The broad white brow was the throne of truth and honour, the lips, as half revealed beneath the slight, dark moustache, were sweet and noble, only in the great fiery dark eyes lurked a hint of the passion that had betrayed him into retaliation for what he believed a wrong at Hilda's hands.

As Phyllis looked from the handsome portrait to the pale, troubled face of her lovely young sister, she realized all the pain she had brought into that young life by the wicked falsehood she had told to Paul, but no pity came to her heart, no desire to undo her cruel work.

On the contrary, she was firmly resolved to prevent their coming to an understanding, if she could prevent it.

"For," she said to herself, bitterly, "he is the only man I ever wanted to marry; yes, even if he had been the poorest of all men, and I should hate her if she ever became his wife!"

"Come, Hilda; I'll cover the pictures again, and we'll go and have some music," she said, with seeming airy carelessness, to hide her real feelings.

They went to the music-room, uncovered the grand piano, and Hilda played some new pieces with a very good touch, then sang several songs, though in a tremulous voice.

She had not yet recovered from the surprise and dismay of seeing Paul Denver's picture.

While she was singing, Phyllis noticed a vase of roses on the piano, filling the December air with summery sweetness.

"Jacqueminot roses in December! Goodness, Hilda, how extravagant you are!" she exclaimed, interrupting the song.

Hilda blushed up to her temples, nodded, and sang on, and when Phyllis was alone with her mother again, she lectured her on this extravagance.

"You'll need that money when you lose this position, and you oughtn't to let Hilda spend it for new music and hot-house flowers," she said, severely.

"I should hope Hilda has more sense," returned the old lady, annoyed by this blame of her favourite.

"Then how—" began Phyllis, curiously; and the old lady explained:

"Hilda has an unknown admirer who sends her flowers, fruit, books, and new music every week. The things are always left at the side door by a messenger who rings the bell and rushes away before Hilda can pounce on him, so we cannot find out the donor."

"How romantic! It must be Gordon Phillips. She was a great goose not to marry him!" exclaimed Phyllis, enviously.

"Yes—but she did not love him," the mother returned, with a stifled sigh; for it would have pleased her well to see Bonnie Hilda so well married.

Meanwhile, Hilda was in her own room, writing to Bertha.

"I have found Paul Denver's portrait in this house, and you must tell me what it means! Oh, Bertha, you know how I dislike that man, and I hope you have not deceived me! Can it be he is the son of the house! But you told me their name was Penfold. Please write at once and explain everything to your frantic friend

"HILDA."

She posted the letter that very hour, and waited impatiently for the reply.

"Oh, if I dared leave the house this day, this hour; but poor mamma, I must think of her. I dare not plunge her into helpless poverty!" she sighed, despairingly.

CHAPTER XV.

PHYLLIS duly carried out her ambitious plans, and installed herself and husband in one of the most fashionable hotels of London. Then by the end of another week her wily husband began to carry out his secret schemes.

He intimated that poor Hilda must be very lonely, cooped up with the old woman all the while.

"Oh, no; Hilda is enjoying her life very well, and is busy writing a novel. She hopes to become an author," Phyllis replied.

But he was not to be put off, and observed that although Hilda had treated him badly, he was willing to let bygones be bygones, and take her about a little. He would get three tickets for the opera that night, if Phyllis wished it.

His wife looked searchingly at him, and she could have killed him for the eager light of hope that shone in his dark eyes at the bare thought of seeing Hilda again—Hilda whom he loved still, in spite of the ties that bound him to another.

She smiled at thought of the cruel disappointment in store for him, and replied sweetly that it would please her very much; but there was no use thinking of such a pleasure, as Hilda was so infuriated with him, owing to the insulting speech he had made on his last visit, that she vowed never to meet him again.

Huntly Warner's gloomy brow grew dark with rage as he almost hissed,—

"Why didn't you tell me this sooner!"

He looked so fierce and threatening, in his wrath and disappointment, that Phyllis trembled with fear, though she answered, calmly,—

"I didn't wish to wound your feelings by telling you how Hilda despised you, but you forced it from me."

He regarded her suspiciously, muttering,—

"I believe you invented this story purely to annoy me just because you are jealous."

She replied, with pretended indifference,—

"You are free to call on my sister, and see what reception she will accord you."

"I will and if she does not treat me kindly, I'll punish her by taking you back to the country."

"I cannot see why Hilda should care about that, as we don't pretend much fondness for each other, so the punishment would fall alone on me," she returned, with pretended meekness; but when he flung out of the room, in silent rage, she laughed softly to herself.

"Your game is foiled, and you would like to bury me in the country again, would you, to vent your spleen on Hilda, on an unwilling victim! But I'll see about that! The money is in the bank to my credit now, and you cannot take it away, so I'll do as I please."

And she paraded up and down before the long mirror, gazing complacently at the reflection of her new finery, and the flash of the diamonds on her fingers and in her ears shining—

"When young married women in society are

neglected by their husbands they usually console themselves by flirting with other men, so I shall look about for some handsome young man to amuse me, since Huntly has the bad taste to prefer my sister."

Meanwhile Hilda was busy, as her sister said, writing a novel, and waiting anxiously for an answer from Bertha, that was very slow in arriving.

But Hilda was becoming unpleasantly certain that the house she lived in must be Paul Denver's home.

She had found his name in many books in the library, and many pictures of him in the albums that littered the tables.

"Bertha has deceived me somehow. In her wish to secure this place for me she feared to mention his name, knowing I would refuse to come. I wonder if he was in the plot to get me here—if he knows about it. If I thought so I would leave the house to-morrow," vowed Hilda, petulantly, for she was angry with herself for a weakness she could not overcome.

She went every day to the library to look at the portrait of the man she thought she hated, and it charmed her, held her with a magnetic power she could not resist. She would remain sometimes an hour, with a heavy shawl wrapped about her to ward off the wintry cold, while she gazed and gazed as if fascinated, living over in painful memory her brief acquaintance with Paul that had ended so cruelly.

She would rush from the room, crying out angrily,—

"I hate him!"

But very often she dreamed of him through the long wintry nights, and always in her dreams they were lovers fond and true.

It vexed her so that she consulted an ancient dream-book, and the oracle said,—

"If you dream often of a handsome young man, and that he kisses and caresses you, it is a sign that you are in love with him."

Hilda blushed crimson, and the tears sparkled into her limpid blue eyes.

"I hate him!" she cried again, and threw the book into the fire.

She tried not to think of him and to take a romantic interest in the unknown person who sent her flowers and music of the most expensive kind. She enjoyed having them, but was uneasy lest Gordon Phillips were the sender.

"I don't want him to spend his time and money on me, for I can never care for him," she said, frankly, to her mother.

One bright sunny morning she and her mother decided to go on a little shopping tour, and while they were waiting at a corner for an omnibus Mrs. Stuart cried out in dismay,—

"Oh, dear! me, I've forgotten my eyeglasses, and I cannot tell the quality of anything unless I have them."

"I'll go back for them," said Hilda, with a secret sigh, for she knew how often they were misplaced.

"Thank you, dear. I believe I had them in the library this morning."

Hilda flew back, let herself in by the side entrance, and hurried up to the library, saying to herself,—

"But I shall be sure not to find them here. Mamma's memory is very uncertain."

She flashed into the room a vision of girlish grace and beauty in a dark-green gown, a black plumed hat, and a bunch of fresh red roses on her breast.

The next moment a shrill cry of fear and alarm issued from her lips, for she found she was not alone.

The lid of one of the large locked desks in the room was thrown back, and before it sat a young man with his back to her, busily turning over some papers.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was the greatest shock of Hilda Stuart's life when she beheld the strange man sitting there so coolly, with his soft felt hat jammed down over his brows, while he ransacked the Penfold desk with the air of one perfectly at home.

Conflicting feelings rushed over her mind—indignation at his boldness, alarm for her own safety, and fears for the family valuables.

What might not be in the desk? Of course it contained papers of value, or it had not been so carefully locked.

She gazed but an instant, with heaving breast, flashing eyes, and a paling cheek; then the sense of accountability working in a highly conscientious nature prevailed over her natural timidity, and with a loud cry she darted forward and clutched the intruder's arm.

"Thief! Robber!"

The man had already started to fly, but she was too quick for him, and swung on to his arm with both hands, displaying a frantic strength as amazing to herself as to him, for he vociferated in muffled tones,—

"Leave go, I entreat you! I do not wish to use force!"

But his valiant assailant hung on tightly, exclaiming,—

"You shall not get away! I'll lock you in this room, while I call the police!"

How she was to accomplish this feat did not seem very clear, for the person she had grappled was a very athletic specimen of young manhood, and in spite of his predicament gave a low laugh of amusement at her angry threat, though he carefully kept his face averted while he struggled with her, intent on escaping without doing her personal violence.

Again he repeated in muffled tones, through which ran a low vibration of mocking laughter,—

"Release me, my dear girl, or I shall be compelled to embrace you! I feel the temptation overcoming me now!"

"Wretch!" she gasped, and with a sudden clever inspiration thrust out her tiny foot, and tripped him as he tried to struggle from her grasp.

The ruse succeeded even better than she could have hoped.

The intruder, still keeping his back to her, and taken thus at a great disadvantage, stumbled, threw out his hands, but lost his balance, and falling forward, struck his head against the corner of the desk ere he measured his length upon the floor.

Hilda flew to the door to carry out her threat, but ere she closed it her woman's curiosity made her cast one hasty backward glance.

A loud and frightened cry shrieked over her lips, her hands fell to her sides, her face went death-white, and she stood still like a figure turned to stone.

The man, who was stunned by the blow from the corner of the desk, was lying in a limp heap on his side, with his head on his arm, as if even in unconsciousness he wished to shield his face from her scrutiny.

But one hasty glance was enough to bring that cry of horror from Hilda's lips, and to blanch her lovely cheeks to the hue of death.

Was not every one of those lineaments imprinted on her heart?

Had she not been haunted by them day and night?

Was there another face as handsome, as alluring, and as false in all the wide, wicked world?

Not to bonny Hilda, the simple little country maiden, who stared with dilated eyes at the awful sight, whispering presently, in a terrified moan,—

"It is Paul Denver! And—he—is—dead—dead—for—he—does—not—move—or—speak!"

Yes, it was Paul Denver, lying there so still, with that ghastly face and closed eyes. He did not smile at her now as of old; he had no more light, mocking words to wound her heart; he could not carry out his threat of a moment ago to embrace her, for his arms lay still by his sides. He did not move nor speak; his face was as ghastly, with its closed eyes, as grim Death itself.

At that moving sight all Hilda's hotly cherished anger and resentment melted into tenderness and pity, and keen remorse for the evil she had wrought.

She flew across the floor and knelt down by his side, touching him with agonized little hands, pleading, praying,—

"Paul, dear Paul, I did not mean to hurt you! I did not know it was you! I thought it was some horrid burglar! Oh, speak to me, look at me, darling! It cannot be that you are dead! No, no, no!"

But her tears and her cries seemed to fall on cold, unresponsive clay.

His hand dropped heavily from her clasp, the dark eyes did not open, nor the silent lips speak, at her wild entreaty.

"He is dead, my love is dead!" she cried in anguish, and covered his face and hands with tears and kisses, forgetting everything else but that for a few sweet summer hours he had made her wildly happy—so happy that the memory of it could never die.

Suddenly she sprang erect, listening in alarm.

An impatient voice downstairs was calling loudly,—

"Hilda! Hilda! My dear, my dear!"

Her mother, impatient at her long delay, had returned.

Trembling violently, Hilda thought, in deadly fear,—

"If I am found here alone with a dead man I shall be accused of his murder!"

Like a flash she darted outside the door, locking in her ghastly secret, and dropping the key into her pocket. Then she flew breathlessly down the stairs.

"Oh, Hilda, I had my glasses with me, after all—on the top of my head, beneath my bonnet and veil!" holding them up triumphantly. "And here's a letter the postman just brought—from Bertha, of course."

Hilda thrust the letter into her pocket and caught her mother's arm.

"Come!" she cried, almost roughly dragging her out into the street again, away from that horror-haunted house.

CHAPTER XVII.

BUT while Hilda went her rounds like one in some painful dream, believing Paul Denver dead, the young man was slowly struggling back to life within the locked room where she had left him.

For more than an hour he lay stunned upon the carpet ere consciousness returned, and even then he was so dazed that for awhile he could not collect his thoughts, but lay still, idly wondering at his own condition, and making no effort to rise.

Suddenly he lifted his head and looked at the door.

A key clicked in the lock, the door swung open, and Hilda Stuart entered with a hesitating step, her beautiful face pale with horror as she came towards him.

A low cry came from his lips as memory rushed over him in a sudden flood.

He knew not why he was there; he remembered the struggle with Hilda, in which he had been so badly worsted.

So, she had gone away and left him thus, the heartless girl!

At his cry of surprise the girl recoiled in wonder, then bounded towards him, crying in unmistakable joy,—

"Oh, you live, you are recovering! Thank Heaven! thank Heaven!"

For a moment she forgot her past anger and resentment, forgot everything but that the dead was alive again.

Kneeling down beside him she peered into his face, and pressed her hand upon his brow, her blue eyes brimming with happy tears.

At first no words came to either; they only looked into each other's eyes, and those glances were eloquent with love.

Suddenly Hilda realized it, and drew back with a burning blush.

"Oh," she whispered, tremulously, "how glad I am that you are better! Can you rise? May I help you?" holding out her hands impulsively.

He accepted the offer, and made much ado of rising, that he might cling to her as long as possible.

When he was seated, and had released her hands, she continued, anxiously,—

"How pale you look! I must bring you some wine."

"No, thank you; I am better now. Why did you go away so cruelly and leave me?" pathetically.

She had dropped into a chair, pallid and trembling. Her voice shook as she answered,—

"I—I—thought you dead. I was frightened, and ran away."

"Why did you return?"

"Shall I tell you? I feared—to be accused of your murder; so I—came back—to—to—drag you down—to the cellar, and hide—"

Her voice broke, her head fell back over her chair. She had fainted with the relief from the horror of the last few hours.

Paul rushed to her side and lifted the heavy head upon his breast, kissing the pale cheeks in a passion of grieving love, though he thought,—

"How angry she would be if she knew!"

It would have made him deliciously happy if he could have known how she had kissed and caressed him awhile ago, when she thought him dead.

Feeling how cold her cheeks were, he exclaimed,—

"She will freeze in this cold library. I must carry her to the music-room, where it is warm and cosy."

And though still weak from the shock he had received, he bore her safely to the room, his eager arms thrilling with the contact of the lovely form, and laid her down on a luxurious sofa. Then while he was chafing her little hands she opened her eyes, murmuring,—

"Where am I?"

"You fainted, and I brought you from the cold library to this warm room," he exclaimed, tenderly.

Hilda suddenly remembered everything and sat up, gently pushing him from her, as she exclaimed,—

"Oh, how glad I am that you live! That I am not a murderess! Oh, I would not live over the agony of the last few hours for the wealth of the whole world!"

"But I thought you hated me!" he exclaimed, eager to trip her into a tender confession.

But all in a moment the old belligerent look came into her eyes, and she exclaimed,—

"What has that to do with it? Even though I hate you, I would not wish the burden of your death upon my soul!"

"True; but do you still hate me?" plaintively, with a pleading look in the big dark eyes.

All at once she changed from the gentle, yielding girl to the proud, angry Hilda of their last meeting. The softness fled from her eyes, the colour flamed into her pale cheek, and she retorted,—

"I have found no reason for changing my opinion of you since our last meeting."

"Yet once you said you loved me," he objected, still plaintively, and the infinite sadness of the tone touched her in spite of herself, and set her wondering why he always liked to recur to the past. Was it just to humiliate her more deeply?

But before she could utter a word in reply, they were startled by a voice from the half-open door,—

"I beg pardon if I am intruding."

There stood Huntly Warner with an angry sneer on his lips.

Coolly advancing and throwing himself into a chair, he continued,—

"I knocked and knocked, but got no answer, so I opened the door and followed the sound of voices up here. It was quite a surprise, Hilda, to find you entertaining Mr. Denver. I supposed he was out of town."

"I only returned lately," Paul replied, trying to be civil, but longing to kick him out of the house.

"Ah!" with a disagreeable smile, then turning to Hilda, "Phyllis sent me to urge you to make one of our opera-party to-night. Will you do so?"

Any other time Hilda would have refused with scorn, but now taken by surprise, and deeply embarrassed by the interview with Paul, she blushed and stammered.

"Yes."

"Then get on your hat and come at once. Phyllis wants you to return with me."

Paul saw a troubled light in the great blue eyes, and said, dashing,—

"If you would permit me to be your escort to the opera, I would call this evening for you and your mother."

"I beg your pardon. She has already promised to go with me," reminded Warner, stiffly.

"Yes, Phyllis wishes it," Hilda said, hurriedly, and rose, adding, "I left mamma shopping, and she said she would call on my sister before she returned, so I will go with you. I can see her there. I will be ready as soon as I can put my evening-dress into a bag."

She bowed and left the room. Huntly Warner remained and glared at Denver, saying,—

"Perhaps, as Miss Stuart's nearest male relative, I have the right to ask you why I find you alone in this house with her to-day?"

"I have no objection to tell you. The house belongs to my mother, and is my home. I have been away on business, and came home for some valuable papers in the library. I saw the Stuarts go out this morning, and entered with a private key, expecting to get away before they returned. Miss Stuart came back and surprised me here; that is all."

"I thank you for your explanation, and hope my frankness has not offended you. It is a task of some anxiety to act a brother's part to a wilful coquette like Hilda, and I shall be glad when she ends her engagement to Gordon Phillips by marrying him."

The words rang false, and Paul looked at him searchingly.

"You believe she is engaged to Phillips?" he asked, pointedly.

"I am sure that she is, and has promised that she will marry him this winter; but then she does not always keep her promises," bitterly.

Just then Hilda appeared at the door.

"I am ready, Mr. Warner."

He sprang up alertly, a smile of triumph on his face, for which Paul could have kicked him, and then Hilda looked at him, saying, distantly,—

"I am very sorry I interrupted you, Mr. Denver, and will now leave you to your leisure. Good-bye," and she went away, wondering if she should ever see him again.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CALVE sung that night, and the great opera-house was crowded. Huntly Warner had great trouble in securing a box for his party.

He could not have succeeded, but that a gentleman and his wife were prevented from attending by the sudden illness of a member of their household, so they were willing to transfer their box to Warner.

When he entered the thronged house that night with his beautiful wife and still lovelier sister-in-law, they created a genuine sensation.

Phyllis was as dark as Hilda was fair, and the contrast favoured both, making each more beautiful.

Phyllis had chosen rose-pink silk and diamond ornaments.

Hilda wore the same white gown she had chosen for Bertha's wedding. A string of pearls clasped her beautiful throat; on her breast she wore a magnificent bunch of white roses, that gave a bride-like effect to her attire.

These flowers had come to her a few moments before she started for the opera. The messenger had gone away too quickly to be interrogated, and no cards accompanied the gift, only some unsigned verses.

"From Gordon Phillips, of course!" exclaimed Phyllis, enviously; adding, "Bride-roses in January are very expensive, and I fancy that he has spent a little fortune in flowers for you this winter."

Hilda looked doubtful and troubled, as she answered,—

"We really have no proof that Mr. Phillips sent the flowers. Besides, how could he have known that I would be with you this evening?"

"That is true; but who else could you suspect, Hilda? You don't think it could be Huntly, do you?" sharply.

"No," her sister answered, coldly, and pinned the flowers on without further comment, feeling that Phyllis was vexed with her for accepting her husband's invitation, and half tempted to tell her the real reason.

But she could not bring herself to utter Paul's name somehow, and kept silent, thinking perhaps Huntly Warner would tell his wife of the *rencontre* with him that afternoon.

So Phyllis had a great surprise—and not an unpleasant one, either—when directly after the first act an elegant gentleman stepped into the box, exclaiming,—

"I couldn't resist the temptation to come in and speak to you, Mrs. Warner! But perhaps you have forgotten me?"

Who could forget Paul Denver, the irresistible, when he chose to recall himself to her memory? Not Phyllis, certainly; and she welcomed him effusively, regretting most bitterly, in secret, that Hilda was with her to monopolise him.

She said, carelessly, presently,—

"I suppose you remember my husband and my sister, little Hilda?"

"Oh, yes."

And they exchanged formal greetings without reference to their earlier meeting that day.

He stood close to Phyllis's chair at first, seeming to give her his most admiring attention, and she was delighted.

"But when did you come? I was not aware you were in town," she said, presently.

"I arrived very recently from a little business tour, and am leaving again within the week."

Phyllis's eyes began to gleam with curiosity, and she exclaimed,—

"I wish to ask you a question. Are you not related to the Penfolds?"

"Certainly," and his dark eyes twinkled, "Mr. Penfold is my step-father."

"And Mrs. Penfold your mother?"

"And Rose my sister—yes." He smiled apologetically at Hilda, but she looked nervous and pale. She had not recovered yet from the shock of the day.

Phyllis went on, brightly,—

"I discovered your portrait in the Penfold library one day, and then Hilda and I had no end of guessing over your connection with them. Hilda thought you must be Miss Rose's lover."

He smiled over at Hilda again, and she answered the look by saying, carelessly,—

"I was always a poor guesser; but I wrote to Bertha about it, and I had her answer to-day, owning the truth. Of course I should never have consented to stay at the house if we had known of Mr. Penfold's connection with the Denvers. As it is, mamma and I will give up the care of the place to-morrow."

She saw him start and whiten with dismay as he cried,—

"I beg that you will not do so. It—it—would greatly inconvenience my mother. And—as for me—I am going away again directly."

Two men came into the box just then, and as Phyllis spoke to them he slipped over behind Hilda's chair, whispering agitatedly,—

"How can you be so unjust to me? All the wrong has been on your side, yet—I—have forgiven you everything for the sake of my great love!"

"Forgiven!" she murmured, and there was a passion of anger in her voice and look. The blue eyes seemed to seethe the eager, handsome lover as he bent his pale face to look into hers, that was so fatally fair and so cruel.

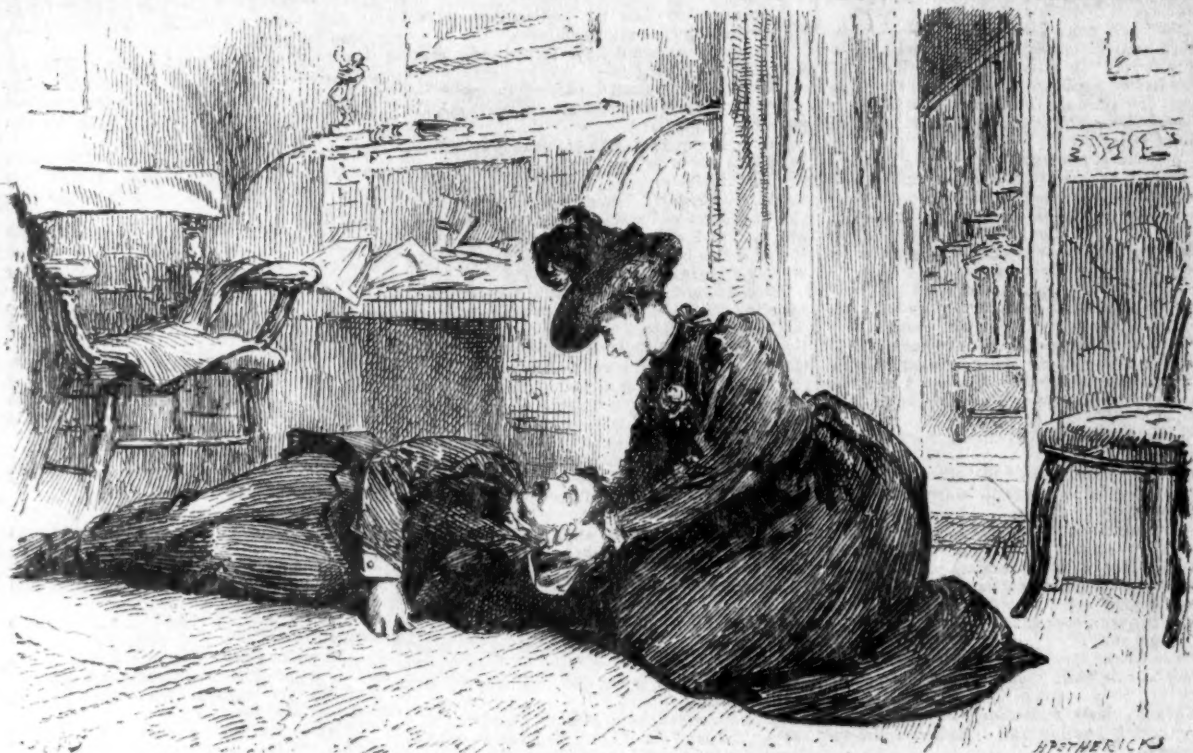
"Hilda, allow me to present my friends," began Phyllis, interrupting the little by-play; and Paul whispered hurriedly,—

"I must speak to you again. We must have an explanation."

She turned without reply to greet the newcomers.

Paul drew back into the shadow of the curtains and watched her face as she turned to the others.

What a change came over it! How bright and frank and glad it looked, all at once!—the frankness and vivacity of that day when they had gone



"PAUL, DEAR PAUL, I DID NOT MEAN TO HURT YOU," CRIED HILDA.

to the picnic together assumed again now to conquer other hearts.

As he watched the flower-like face, so fair and smiling, and listened to the low, sweet voice replying so vivaciously to her new acquaintances, he felt a growing wonder over her inconsistency.

Young and beautiful but poor, why did she not accept some of her advantageous offers of marriage instead of recklessly flirting with her admirers.

She had refused Huntly Warner; she had refused himself, and Bertha said she had declined the offer of Gordon Phillips, although Warner asserted that she was going to marry the latter. He did not believe it, but he wondered what the girl was looking for—perhaps a millionaire.

"She is lovely enough for a princess. I wish her soul was as true and fair as her face," he thought, ruefully, and crossed over to Phyllis, obedient to the flirt of her fan.

She whispered, smilingly,—

"Isn't Hilda the most arrant flirt you ever saw! See how she is charming those two young men! It is well that Gordon Phillips isn't here to see, although, to do him justice, he is not of a jealous disposition."

He answered, rather brusquely,—

"What has Phillips to do with Hilda? Bertha told me, the night of her wedding, that Hilda had refused him."

Mrs. Warner gasped, then rallied, replying, firmly,—

"She changed her mind the second time he proposed to her, and I was glad of it, for it is a good match for Hilda. He is perfectly devoted to her, and has spent a little fortune on her this winter. See! she is wearing his roses now."

"Indeed!" and a cynical smile curved his lips, that put a new suspicion in her head.

It only made her violently angry, for, despite her marriage, he still had a fascination for her, and she hated the thought of Hilda's winning him. She thought, bitterly,—

"He is richer, handsomer, every way more desirable than Huntly Warner, and if Hilda

marries him, she can queen it over me. She shall not do it! I prevented it once, and I will again!"

Just how she was to accomplish it, Phyllis did not clearly see; but she bent her mind to the task while the curtain rose again, and the callers filed out of the box.

At the close of the second act Paul returned, accompanied by a Member of Parliament, whose attentions flattered Phyllis so much that she could not keep Paul from bending over Hilda's chair and whispering,—

"I entreat you not to leave my mother's house. I am going away so soon that I should not have time to secure another caretaker. Has not every arrangement been made for your comfort?"

Hilda drew her breath sharply between her rosy lips, and her eyes flashed as she returned, in an undertone,—

"I have no complaint to make, except that Bertha duped me into accepting the situation, when you and she both knew that I would not have done so had I known you suggested it."

"But why should you resent an attempted kindness on my part? I never wronged you, Miss Stuart."

"Oh, no!" she answered with bitterest sarcasm, her bosom heaving wildly.

Paul continued, with passionate humility,—
"Surely my devotion should win some kindness from you. In these dreary winter days have not my flowers breathed over you the tenderness of my thoughts?"

She blushed, and her eyes fell to the white roses on her breast, as she faltered,—

"You sent them—you?"

"Yes. Why should I deny it! I will not have you thinking that they came from Gordon Phillips. I left an order with my florist when I went away. I thought those fragrant offerings would give you pleasure in your loneliness, and perhaps suggest one whose love you had wronged in your girlish coquetry. You were so young, Hilda, perhaps I ought to forgive you for your cruelty. Let us be friends—lovers—again."

The tenderness of his words and looks began to thaw the ice about her heart, but she was afraid to trust him again. The memory of their parting that summer night rushed wildly over her heart—his cruel looks and words that had cut so deep—and she said to herself, in resentful despair,—

"He does not mean it any more than he did that day when he pretended to love me, and threw back my wounded heart to me, with a laugh and a jest. He is trying to fool me, to see if he can flirt with me again; but he shall not have that triumph; he shall never guess the pain I feel. Let him think that I despise him, that I am too proud to care."

Paul Denver leaned over her eagerly, breathlessly; but he could read no hope in the averted eyes and stiffening lines of the fair, proud face.

"Hilda!" he began, imploringly; but at that moment the curtain rose, and the beautiful *prima donna* came again upon the stage.

A low hum of applause thrilled through the audience, and Hilda quickly unfurled the beautiful white roses she wore, and flung them on the stage at Calvé's feet.

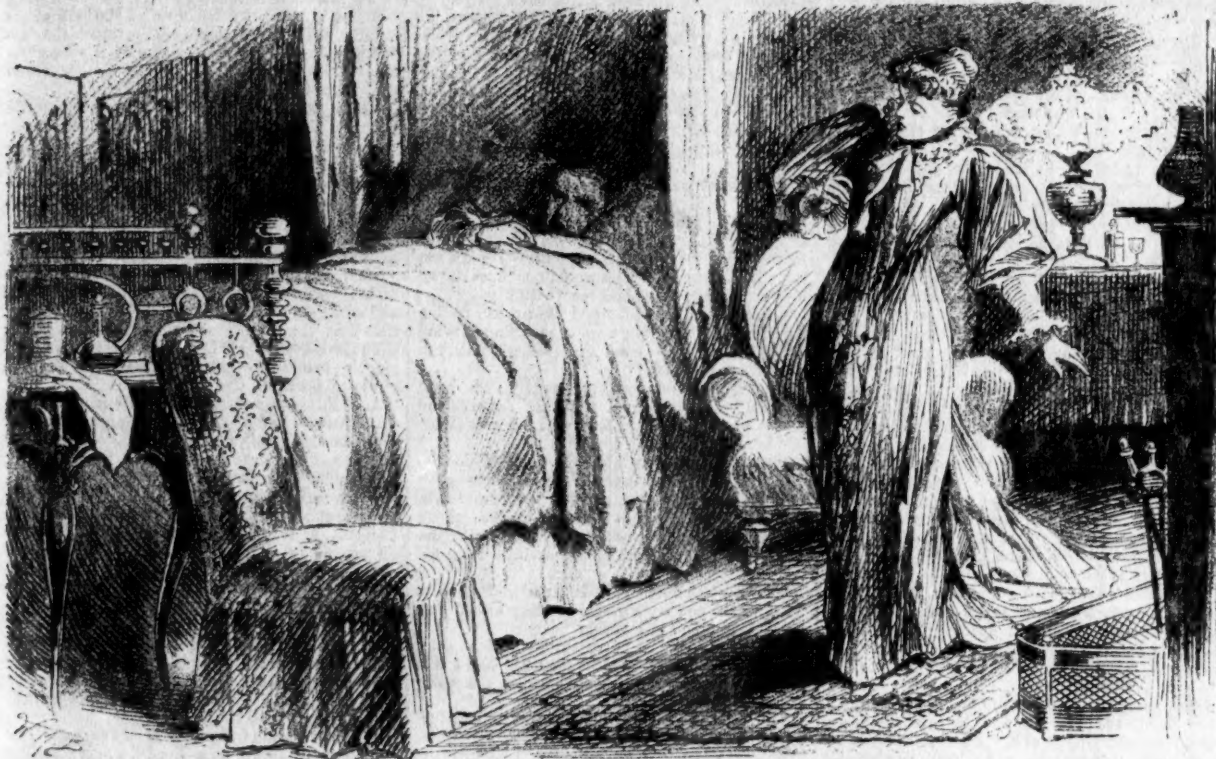
"Did you prize them so little?" Paul breathed, reproachfully; and she answered, in reckless pride,—

"As little as I do the giver."

It was like a death-blow to his hopes; but he uttered no word of protest, only bowed silently and retired from the box.

(To be continued.)

THE Paris catacombs are being utilized for a curious scientific purpose. Several species of animal life have been confined therein, for the purpose of ascertaining the effect of total obscurity on the different subjects. Continued darkness causes the vision of animals to become practically destroyed, and it is with this in view that the experiments have been instituted.



THE INTENSE GAZE OF THOSE EYES ALMOST FRIGHTENED HERMIONE.

THE TRIALS OF HERMIONE.

—101—

CHAPTER XV.

THE Doctor looked grave indeed as he examined Lord Carlyon; but his verdict on the whole was more reassuring than the anxious mother had expected. One leg was broken; but the worst injury was to the head, which had struck against the truck in the suddenness of the collision.

"An inch further and he would have been killed outright," said Dr. Flint, frankly; "as it is, I hope with great care and the best of nursing, to pull him through; but he must be kept as quiet as possible, the least noise would be prejudicial."

Dr. Flint was an old and tried friend of Mrs. Carlyon, and had remained her medical adviser even after his junior partner became her son-in-law. He knew how great were her anxieties, and at once proposed to lessen them by taking the two little Nairns and their nurse home to his wife, who was already a warm friend and admirer of those small people.

"Indeed I could not trouble Mrs. Flint," said the perplexed lady, whose burden seemed almost more than she could bear, "and I promised Janet to keep the children here."

Dr. Flint quite understood that she was in no state to decide anything.

"I'm going round to see Nairn when I leave here," he said in an undertone to the companion, "and I'll break it to his wife how things are. I know she will see at once that the children must be removed. They are too young to fret at the change of guardians; besides, they are very fond of Mrs. Flint."

This was spoken in the hall, whither at a glance from the doctor Hermione had followed him.

"They are dear little things," she answered; "but if quiet is so all important I am sure they ought not to stay here."

"I'll send in a trained nurse at once," said Dr. Flint; "don't let Mrs. Carlyon do too much.

She's been a delicate woman for years, not fit for any exertion."

Hermione found herself seized on by her employer as soon as the doctor had left. Mrs. Carlyon had come out of the sick room in an agony of suspense.

"What did he say to you? Oh, Miss Brown, is it a fatal case, and was he only trying to buoy me up with false hopes?"

"Dr. Flint did not say one word about Lord Carlyon's recovery; but he is most anxious the children should be removed. He says perfect quiet is the only chance."

"Then they must go. Nettie will forgive me. I cannot risk my boy's life."

"Dr. Flint is going to send in a trained nurse, and he will come back himself very soon."

Under the Doctor's auspices the patient had been got to bed. His broken leg was set, and a wonderful cage-like erection over it—technically called a cradle—prevented anything pressing on it. Save for the blue bruise which had so nearly come at a fatal spot, there was no sign of the accident on Carlyon's face. He was very pale, and not even during all the long and painful examination by Dr. Flint had he returned to consciousness. It was as though the blow on his head had stunned him, and that so thoroughly, it was useless to apply restoratives—indeed, the Doctor had said it would be dangerous to try and arouse his dormant senses.

"He looks as if he were dead," breathed his mother, sadly. "I feel he cannot recover."

Mrs. Flint arrived within an hour. She brought a pencilled note from Janet urging that the little ones should be at once transferred to her house. They were bundled up in shawls, and carried straight from their beds to the doctor's brougham without their grandmother even heeding their departure. She seemed to have no thought now beyond the sick room.

Dr. Flint brought bad news. He had been unable to find a nurse disengaged; it had been an unusually severe winter. There were countless

cases of influenza about, and every available nurse seemed to be on duty.

"You must let Miss Brown sit up to-night," said Dr. Flint; "she seems a very capable young woman. By noon to-morrow a nurse will be here from London."

"I will watch by Denis myself."

"Then you will probably faint from exhaustion before morning, and there will be no one at hand if he should recover consciousness and need anything. My dear lady be reasonable. Tell Miss Brown to watch to-night."

"She is so young," said Mrs. Carlyon; "only twenty. She may be afraid to sit up all night with a dying man."

"We will hope Lord Carlyon is not dying," said the doctor, kindly; "anyway, let me speak to Miss Brown myself. Unless I am mistaken she will not shrink from the task."

And he was right. Miss Brown listened attentively to his request, and then said, gravely,—

"I am quite willing to do my best; only I ought to tell you that I have no experience whatever of nursing. If you give me directions I will carry them out faithfully; but I should not know what to do without."

"All you have to do is to administer the medicine I will leave, every four hours. If he seems feverish, lay damp rags upon his forehead; should he rouse from this stupor to delirium, don't be frightened. Men say the strangest things when wandering, don't attempt to argue with him. I've known a delirious person assert that his bed was in the midst of the ocean; well, it wouldn't have done any good to tell him it wasn't. Just humour the patient in every possible way. If he complains of thirst, give him lemonade or barley-water; above all, avoid stimulants, they might throw him into a raging fever. If you really think there's a change for the worse, ring up one of the servants and send her for me; but don't if you can help it, for I have another critical case to go to, and I may not get away till nearly dawn. What with poor Nairn's patients and my own I'm

pretty well run off my legs. I'll be round directly after breakfast."

Excitement, the strangeness of the position, and the positive need to get Mrs. Carlyon to go to bed, kept Hermione from realising what she had undertaken, until she was left alone with her patient, and the last sounds in the house having died out, she knew that the rest of the inmates were in bed.

There was a fire in the grate, and an ample supply of coals were ready to her hand; the lamp, carefully shaded, stood on a small table, with medicine and lemonade for the patient, and sandwiches and wine for the nurse. Mrs. Carlyon had insisted on these last.

Hermione wore a soft dressing-gown of pale heliotrope, trimmed with white, a remnant of her home days—even in the misery of grief it had struck Mrs. Carlyon the garment was strangely elegant for a companion; her soft hair was coiled in one loose plait round her head; her eyes were bright with excitement; she hardly felt fatigue, though it was long past midnight.

Only as the hours passed on, and the nocturnal stillness deepened, the strangeness of her position came home to her with overwhelming force. Supposing, three months ago, anyone had told her she would be watching by Lord Carlyon's sick-bed, she would have laughed them to scorn! It was wonderful that she, of all people, should be left in charge of her enemy.

But was he her enemy?

Hermione's thoughts on this point had undergone a strange change since she came to Harley-gardens. Experience had opened her eyes and disposed her to take a nobler, broader view of life—to see things from other people's standard as well as her own.

She knew now that her father, of his own free will, before she was born, had bartered away the possible rights of any children he might have, so as to catch at the certainty of a handsome income for himself.

She knew that he and his cousin, Colonel Carlyon, had chosen differently; the one man his own personal enjoyment, the other the future benefit of his son. She had as much right to grudge Carlyon to Denis as he would have had to grudge it to her father during the twenty odd years which Hugh Lord Carlyon lived after the deed of settlement.

And her poverty; her isolation; her utter lack of friends and fortune, all this was her father's work. He had known a day must come when she would be penniless; but he had never saved even a hundred pounds for her; he had not even insured his life for her benefit; he had not caused her to learn any profession by which she might support herself, and he had purposely kept her aloof from neighbours of her own station lest she should learn the truth. Dearly as she had loved him, bitterly as she had regretted him, Hermione knew now that her father had acted far more as an enemy to her than had done his successor.

It was so still you might have heard a pin drop; now and then as an ember fell from the grate the slight sound made Hermione almost jump. Lord Carlyon had never moved. Could it be that he was dead! She shivered at the thought.

From her patient her mind fled to her own future. The time for which she had been engaged as Mrs. Carlyon's companion had almost expired; but she knew that the learned Kate was not expected home for some months yet, and Mrs. Carlyon would, probably, keep "Miss Brown" till she returned. After then, when she left Harley-gardens, what was to become of her!

No doubt her present employer would recommend her to another situation. . . . But she was so young; only twenty now. There might be fifty years of life before her; what a number of different situations she would need. Must she wear out her life from youth to middle-age in other people's houses, with them but not of them? Must she go on, year after year, homeless, with no one who really understood and sympathised with her?

One thing was certain: she could never tell her real story to the Carlyons, never confess to them she was the kinswoman who had repulsed their

advances so ungraciously. No, she must just go on hiding herself under a borrowed name, go wearily on from year to year, thankful if she could at least remain hidden from the man the law declared her husband.

She had reached this point in her reflections, when the clock on the mantelpiece struck two. She rose to replenish the fire; then she noticed that Lord Carlyon's eyes were open and fixed upon herself.

The intense gaze of those eyes almost frightened her, and yet she knew perfectly that he did not see her. The dull stupor had passed away, but the spirit of Denis Carlyon wandered on the confines of its earthly prison. He did not know her in the least; he would not have known his own mother if she had been with him.

"Are you thirsty?" asked Hermione, feeling she could not bear that fixed gaze without trying to do something to break the spell. "Will you have some lemonade?"

He took it and drank it eagerly; his hand touched hers as she held the glass for him, and its fierce heat seemed to burn into her own skin.

"Don't let her come here!"

Hermione had been told to be prepared for delirium, but yet she felt bewildered. Denis spoke so quietly, so rationally, that for the moment she would have said he was in full possession of his senses, and that there really *was* someone in the house whom he wanted her to exclude from his room.

"No one shall come," she answered quietly; "but won't you try and go to sleep! then you will be better in the morning."

"I am not ill, I am perfectly well," he said, fretfully still—"but you mustn't let her come. Empson is dead. I couldn't forget the past. Don't let her come."

"No one shall come," repeated Hermione, firmly, "I promise you."

He gave a sigh.

"I don't know who you are, but you speak sensibly. She deceived me once, I could never trust her again. I could never believe a woman who had deceived me."

Hermione shivered. She herself had deceived him, since she was not Mary Brown but his cousin, Hermione Clifford. Somehow it hurt her to know that if Denis discovered the truth he would never believe in her again. The sick man went on talking with all the restless eagerness of delirium.

"Bad to the core," he muttered, "bad to the core. How could any girl put herself in the power of James Clifford?"

And then he sang snatches of songs, or talked of Australia, and his happy life on the farm; but through it all came speeches showing plainly that Denis Carlyon was seeking someone with desperate eagerness, and that this particular person always evaded him.

"The name begins with F," he would say, addressing Hermione as though she shared his task; "did you hear?—F. But it wasn't Finch or Fox; something more distinguished. Can't you guess?"

"I am afraid not," said Hermione, gently; "but won't you wait till to-morrow?"

"I have waited too long already. You don't understand. She may be poor and in distress, while all this money is waiting for her. Fifty thousand pounds is a great deal."

"It is indeed," said Hermione, feeling she would have been thankful for a twentieth part of it.

"Fifty thousand pounds, and her name begins with an F! Can't you help me?"

He raised his voice, and the question took the form of a piteous appeal. Afraid, almost, that his mother would hear the cry and come downstairs in alarm, Hermione bent over her patient and tried to soothe him by every means in her power. She reasoned with him exactly as though he had been a little child, assuring him that the moment he was stronger, they would begin the search for the unknown lady; they would buy a directory and go through all the F's, they would—but here she did not have to draw any further on her imagination, for looking at Denis she saw that his eyes had closed; he was sleeping peacefully, his hand still holding hers.

She dared not move for fear of awakening him. For hours she knelt beside the bed afraid to stir; then as his sleep grew sounder, she ventured to try and release her hand. His clasp relaxed, and she escaped back to the big elbow chair Mrs. Carlyon had provided for her.

The servants were up early, and the housemaid brought Miss Brown some tea and toast by seven, saying her mistress was still asleep.

"I hadn't the heart to arouse her, Miss; she must have been so worn out, and I felt there might be bad news for her. How do you think Lord Carlyon is?"

"Better, I hope. I think the stupor has passed, and he is in a natural sleep."

Half an hour later came Mrs. Carlyon, ashamed of her tardy awakening, and looking very frail and white in the early morning light. She insisted on Hermione's going away to rest while she took her place by Denis, and the girl went readily, her nerves felt so over-strained, she was afraid of breaking down.

Dr. Eliot pronounced his patient going on satisfactorily, and at twelve the nurse arrived; she seemed a gentle kindly woman, but from the moment of her arrival the patient took an aversion to her. He was still delirious when awake, and the mere presence of Nurse Ward in his room seemed to incense him so terribly that Mrs. Carlyon, in a desperate fright, sent for the doctor.

He thought it was only a phase and would pass off. The nurse was an admirable person; he could trust her thoroughly to see after the injuries, some of which required surgical attention. He suggested that until Denis recovered his full senses the nurse should only minister to him in the daytime under Mrs. Carlyon's auspices as peace-maker, and that the night watches should still be left to Miss Brown.

"It will only be for two or three days," he explained. "When once Lord Carlyon comes to himself I am sure he will prove a more reasonable patient."

It was quite a week after the accident before Denis seemed "perfectly rational"—that was what the nurse called it; but Mrs. Carlyon only felt as he looked up suddenly with the old love shining in his brown eyes, that her boy had come back to her.

"Have I been ill long, mother? What happened? Was there an accident?"

"You fell as you were getting out of the train, I suppose!" she added, wonderingly; "you thought it had stopped."

"I remember now," he put up one hand—how thin and white it had grown in those three days. "I saw Duncan in the other train, and now he has escaped me."

Mrs. Carlyon looked so frightened that Denis said feebly,—

"There's nothing to scare you, mother. I did want to see Duncan very much, and I failed to catch him. It's a great disappointment, but it can't be helped."

"Can't Mr. Duncan come to see you here when you are better?" suggested Mrs. Carlyon, "you know any friend of yours would be welcome. I will write and ask him."

Denis shook his head almost pathetically.

"I cannot give you his address. Besides, he would not come. Andrew Duncan has some reason I cannot fathom for wanting to avoid me."

"Have you quarrelled?"

"You don't understand, mother. Duncan is no friend of mine. He was the valet of that poor fellow Home, of whom I told you, and I feel if only I could get hold of him he could help me to find my unknown ward."

"If I were you, Denis, I should not worry about that girl," said Mrs. Carlyon, energetically—"that woman, rather, as you say, she must be nearly forty. The money is safe in the Bank when she turns up, and you are not bound to spend the best years of your life in rushing about looking for her."

"I shall never feel satisfied till I have found her."

"She may be dead," suggested Mrs. Carlyon, "as nothing has been heard of her since she was a child. But, Denis, you mustn't worry about

her now; all you have to do is to keep yourself quiet and get well as soon as possible."

Dr. Flint reported very favourably of his patient that evening, and from then Denis seemed to mend apace. Nurse Ward sat up with him at night. His mother just sufficed for the day, and Hermione ceased to frequent the sick room; her work seemed rather sparing Mrs. Carlyon all domestic and social cares, keeping the somewhat startled household in fair working order, and smoothing those inner wheels upon the revolving of which so much of one's comfort depends.

Denis said nothing, but he must have had some vague recollection of the earlier part of his illness, for he said one day suddenly,—

"Did I talk a lot of rubbish when I was off my head, mother?"

"No, dear," Mrs. Carlyon assured him, "not when I was with you; but you were rather restless at night and would not let Nurse Ward come near you."

"Very ungrateful of me, for she is a real good sort," said Denis; "but there was another nurse here then. I can distinctly remember someone else being near me quite different from her."

"Miss Brown sat up with you the first few nights. Dr. Flint said she had a gift for nursing, and you seemed quieter with her."

"Miss Brown? Why she is a mere child."

"She has been almost like a daughter to me in this time of trouble. I can't think what I should have done without her. Kate would have been utterly useless."

Denis said no more then, but a day or two later when for the first time he was lifted on to the sofa, he said, suddenly,—

"Why does Miss Brown never come near me? Mother you look positively tired out. Go to Mrs. Flint's and see how the babies are getting on."

"But my dear, Nurse Ward is asleep, and—"

"I shan't want anything," said Denis; "besides, perhaps Miss Brown will come and sit with me. If she was brave enough to undertake a lonely night watch, she won't mind being left in charge for one afternoon."

Mrs. Carlyon explained the arrangement to her companion without saying it was her son's express wish. Hermione did not quite know whether she liked the idea or not. She felt strangely interested in Denis Carlyon; but there is something embarrassing in meeting a man for the first time after nursing him while in violent delirium.

"You have quite forgiven me, Miss Brown," was Carlyon's greeting. "I am afraid I wore out your compassion."

"Oh, no," she answered as she seated herself in a big chair by the hearth, "but Nurse Ward is so much more experienced than I am; she is far more fitted to look after you."

"You might have come to see me as a friend," he objected.

"Well," she answered lightly, "I am here now. Shall I read to you, Lord Carlyon?"

"I would much rather we talked."

"I don't think talking is good for you."

"Oh, a little can't hurt. My head is all right now. It's this miserable broken leg which keeps me an invalid."

"Then we will talk," agreed Hermione, demurely, "only you must begin. I never have much to say."

"Not when you are at home?"

"I have no home."

Carlyon bit his lip in deep self-reproach.

"Forgive me, I am a brute," Miss Brown, did I talk a great deal of nonsense when you first took me under your care?"

"Yes, you did. You were constantly appealing to me to keep 'her' out. On one occasion you wanted me to send for the police to remove 'her.' Another delusion of yours was that you were seeking a lady whose name began with an F. With this slender clue you seemed prepared to search the world. Dr. Flint had ordered us not to cross you in anything, so I did my best to help in the quest. I believe I suggested as soon as you could get out we should buy a post-office directory and call on all the ladies whose initial

was F. It would have taken the rest of our natural life, but I forgot that."

"It was no delusion," said Carlyon, simply. "What a strange thing the brain is! My last thought before the accident was of that lady, and so the idea pursued me all through my delirium."

"Was it the same lady you wanted the policeman to remove?"

"Oh, no; it was my ward. I expect my mother has told you the story. A fellow passenger of mine left me fifty thousand pounds in trust for his sister, but by some omission forgot to tell me her name."

"It sounds like a romance. I wish you would tell me all about it."

He did so—he told her the story of the homeward voyage, his suspicions of Andrew Duncan, his visit to the old church clerk, and finally how his certainty that Andrew Duncan was sitting in the up-train had led to his accident.

"I think the old man must have been right and the girl's name have begun with an F. It's not much clue, but I suppose it would protect you from pretended claimants?"

"Yes; but, Miss Brown, I want to find the lady. I feel it treason to my dead friend for his money to be lying idle while she may have sore need of it."

"Can you describe Andrew Duncan?"

"Yes. Why, surely you do not know him?"

"I want you to describe him."

"Well, he is tall and wonderfully lithe and supple in figure. I always had the impression that at some time he had been an acrobat. Then his hair was black and curly, with just that touch of crispness which betrays coloured blood; his skin was too dark for an Englishman; and, in spite of his typically Scotch name, I always felt sure he was a foreigner."

"And he never looked you in the face when he spoke to you?" put in Miss Brown. "He wore on his little finger a ring far too valuable for a servant, and you never by any chance heard his footsteps? You looked up suddenly and found him at your side—is that it?"

"You have described him far better than I could do. Miss Brown, you have evidently seen Duncan. Can you tell me where to find him?"

"I cannot. When I was a child my father had a servant called Duncan, who was devoted to him. I was very young at the time, and a child's memory can't always be trusted, but from his first coming I was afraid of this servant. My father thought him invaluable. To me, child as I was, there seemed something stealthy and unnatural about him."

"And when did he leave Mr. Brown?" asked Denis, with great interest.

"About eleven years ago. He was going out to Australia as valet to a young man in very bad health, who was at Naples when Andrew was there with us, and took a fancy to him."

"Was not your father sorry to part with him?"

"No; Andrew had married my nurse, and my father found it out by accident and was furious; he sent them both away and declared he would have no more to do with half-castes. Duncan's mother had been a creole."

"And you have heard nothing of him since?"

"Nothing; but then it is years since I left Naples. Juanita (Duncan's wife) had a little cottage near the vineyards and made a living somehow. She told my father once that Duncan never sent her a single shilling."

"I should think your Duncan must be the same as mine," said Carlyon, much interested, "and you seem to have quite as unfavourable an opinion of him."

"I shall never forget the day he left. He cursed us both—my father for sending him away, me for being my father's child. He said that poverty and loneliness, shame and misery, would be my portion; that I should be an exile from home, and live among strangers; that I should marry the first man who asked me, and he would do his best to break my heart. I was only nine years old, but that awful curse seemed to sear itself on my heart. Then after a time, child-like, I forgot it, and as I grew up the terrible prophecy quite ceased to trouble me."

"I only recalled it when my father died, and

I found myself as Andrew had predicted—alone in the world."

"It was a cruel curse. Miss Brown, my mother has long felt that you must have had some heavy trouble. Don't you think you could confide in her and let her help you?"

"No one in this world could help me," said Hermione, bitterly; "nothing can bring back the dead."

"But there are other troubles friendship can smooth. After your free happy life in Italy, it must have been hard indeed to earn your own living, and of all occupations I should think a companionship was most trying."

"You have only to try and utterly efface yourself—oh, I am not speaking against Mrs. Carlyon, she is kindness itself, but—well, you know what I mean; a companion is always 'just outside' the lives with people as an equal, but she is not one of them. Their house is not her home, their friends are not her friends. She always stands just beyond the pale."

And Denis, deeply interested as he was, yet felt this outburst so impossible to answer that he was actually thankful when his mother's return interrupted the *tête-à-tête*.

CHAPTER XVI.

LORD CARLYON had not been mistaken; the man he saw in the London train was Andrew Duncan, and no other. Mr. Home's ex-valet by no means deserved that gentleman's trust and confidence; his character was a combination of some of the very worst traits of human nature. If he had seemed to serve Donald Home well, it was simply because the situation suited him, and he was feathering his own nest.

Duncan was the son of a canny Scotchman, and a beautiful creole and the child of this mixed marriage presented a strangely complex character; he had the plodding, dauntless perseverance of his father's race, but he had inherited to the full all the fire and passion of his mother's people; he had loved the beautiful girl employed as nurse to Lord Carlyon's only child too well not to make her his own, but with a low cunning he had kept the union a secret from his master.

When it was discovered, and he and his wife were expelled from their situations without a character, he was furious against Lord Carlyon, and vowed vengeance on him and his child.

Hermione's memory had been wonderfully exact when she told the story to Denis Carlyon; but there were a few details she omitted, probably they had been kept purposely from a child of nine years old.

The beautiful Italian girl whom Duncan had married, did not long survive his departure; she left one child of nearly three, who was adopted for her excessive beauty by an English doctor and his wife living in the outskirts of Naples.

With Juanita's death Lord Carlyon lost all interest in the matter. He had been angry with Duncan for deceiving him, and never troubled his head about the child, or he might have known that after his wife's death Andrew Duncan wrote to Dr. Lester stating that he absolutely refused to give up his paternal rights on Liska. He was willing, nay more than willing; he would be grateful for her to remain with her adopted parents until he had made his fortune, but after that—she must share it.

How the Lesters would have decided is doubtful; but about that time the doctor died, leaving his wife very badly off, and the contribution Duncan at once offered for his child's support became so all essential to her she did not oppose his plans. If it cost little to live in her quiet, primitive way, at least Andrew Duncan provided a full half of that cost, and as she loved Liska very dearly, the lonely childless woman would have been grieved indeed to lose her adopted daughter.

She had never seen Andrew Duncan. She did not even speak Italian fluently, and so Juanita's story had never been quite understood by her. She knew that Liska's mother had been governess to the only child of an English

nobleman, but she construed that to mean governess or lady in charge, not simply a domestic servant; while she always had the idea that Duncan was better born than his wife.

Many people had they known its amount would have marvelled how the man managed to pay Mrs. Lester the annual sum out of his wages; but, then, Duncan was in his master's confidence. Home was a most unsuspicious man, and so the servant managed to help himself freely to such money as he wanted.

Mr. Home's resolution to leave Australia met with Duncan's warm approval, only he perseveringly represented to his master a sudden return to the English climate in January would be fatal to him; he must spend the rest of the winter and the early spring in a warmer land—why not in Italy?

Andrew Duncan carefully avoided any mention of his child. Liaka was now ten years old, and the father's heart yearned for her with all the passionate intensity of his southern nature. He meant to have Liaka near him in future; he meant her to be known and adored by Donald Home, but he did not intend that gentleman to know she was his valet's child. And then, just before Mr. Home went on board the *Arcthusa* in an unusually severe attack of illness, feeling lonely and depressed, he told Duncan a little of his story.

"You have been a good and faithful servant to me, Andrew, and you won't go unrewarded. I would take your advice and spend a few months in Italy gladly, only I have the most urgent reason for wishing to push on to England. I want to find my sister."

He told Duncan the story he afterwards confided to Lord Carlyon, only with far more details. He spoke to Denis about his past, once when he was weak and exhausted, the whole conversation perhaps compressed into one short hour; but Andrew Duncan was with him night and day in the brief time while he waited for the sailing of the *Arcthusa*, and having once broached the subject to his servant, the dying man returned to it again and again.

"She was such a pretty little child, Andrew," he would say, speaking as though he had seen Lucy quite recently, instead of thirty odd years ago, "and she loved me dearly."

"We'll find her, sir, if she's above ground," said Duncan, respectfully. "She'd be a woman grown by now."

"Nearly forty. Time flies so."

"Now, don't despond, sir. Maybe the lady's married, and there will be children of hers to remind you of the little one you loved long ago. Anyway, we'll find Miss Home."

"Not Home, Andrew. Miss Fielding—Lucy Fielding. I don't think it would be difficult to trace her; you see her father was in the Army—Captain Fielding of the ninety-ninth regiment. I don't know much about military customs, but I should think an officer's child would have a pension, and then, of course, the War Office must have her address or they couldn't pay it."

If his ignorance strikes you as remarkable, remember he had been away from England over thirty years. He went to Australia a lad of fifteen, and had never known a soldier or a soldier's family since.

Andrew Duncan had a clear head. He knew his master's darger a great deal better than did that master himself, and he felt it was very likely Mr. Home would not live to reach England, so he carefully jotted down in a memorandum book these facts:—

"Lucy Fielding, daughter of Captain Charles Fielding, late of the ninety-ninth regiment, about forty years of age, last heard of at Ashley House, Western-road, Chelsea. Fair, blue eyes, light hair."

Mr. Home poured over his family papers by the hour together, but he trusted Duncan absolutely. He never dreamed that while the doctor was with him one day Andrew carefully looked through the contents of the precious pocket-book, and selected the only three papers he thought likely to be of use—namely, the last three letters of Lucy's mother in which she announced her husband's death, giving the

names of the two friends who had promised to do their best for Lucy if she were taken.

When Donald Home sealed the pocket-book with his own signet he little guessed the heartless theft.

Andrew saw with jealousy his master's growing attachment to Lord Carlyon. He did not at all approve of it; and when the will was made, which left Denis sole executor, he had much ado to conceal his rage. But when Mr. Home's death followed so closely he drew breath; he felt it was almost impossible for his master to have had time to tell Lord Carlyon everything; and, as the only letters bearing really on the quest were in his own possession, the nobleman would have a fruitless task. Duncan left the ship at Naples fully resolved that, happen what might, he would be the first to find the heiress and tell her of her good fortune. Surely a tenth of her handsome legacy would not be too much to claim as his reward. Five thousand pounds! Enough to keep him and Liaka for life and dower the child handsomely when she married.

Up to this point Andrew had simply plotted to obtain a heavy reward from Lucy Fielding for the good news he would bring her; his other and more evil scheme was decided later.

When he was in Naples he found himself received as her equal by Mrs. Lester, a gentle, motherly woman of about forty. She was hospitality itself, and so devoted to Liaka that Duncan felt he could turn her to his purpose by means of her love for his child.

He spoke vaguely of some large fortune he expected soon to be his; but he left fifty pounds with Mrs. Lester, when, after a ten days' stay, he started for England, and had established the friendliest relations with the doctor's widow.

Arrived in London, a very short time gave Duncan the information to gain which Denis Carlyon would have paid thousands.

Lucy Fielding, on her mother's death, had been admitted to a school for officers' daughters, and had remained there until she was eighteen, when she left to be governess in a private family.

The lady superintendent, who gave Duncan this information, quite believed his story that he was a younger brother of Mrs. Fielding; and, returning from abroad after years of exile, was trying to find his niece.

"We do not always know the histories of our girls after they leave us," said the lady pleasantly; "but Miss Fielding's lot was so unusual, it has been treasured up in the annals of the school ever since; it was at once brilliant and sad. Before she was nineteen she married a nobleman and died within the year. It is possible her child may still be alive. We don't study the Peerage very much here, but I believe all the girls with any romantic turn of mind like to think of Lady Carlyon's story."

"Lady Carlyon! Do you mean that Lucy—that my niece, married Lord Carlyon?"

"Yes; he was much older. I have been told it was a case of love at first sight."

Andrew Duncan bowed himself out. He tramped to the railway station angry and disappointed. The child of the man he hated—the girl whom long ago he had cursed—was Donald Home's niece and heiress.

It was as clear as daylight; one of those cases about which there can be no doubt, no conjecture. It only rested with Andrew to give Hermione Carlyon fifty thousand pounds!

"She shall never have it—never!" and the man gnashed his teeth in bitter rage. "Not even to make five thousand for myself and Liaka, would I help her to such a fortune! If only Lord Carlyon does not suspect that his ward is his own cousin, it will be many a year before Miss Hermione touches a farthing of the master's gold!"

"But, stay! Why should that money lie idle, when it might be doing someone good? Would it not be possible to produce a false Lucy Fielding?"

And then a fiendish scheme entered his brain. Why should not Mrs. Lester claim the fortune as Mr. Home's sister, and produce Liaka as her child and heiress?

(To be continued.)

THE CASHIER'S SISTER.

—307—

(Continued from page 392.)

That evening Isolt dressed herself in the quietest of clothing, and went out towards the Berry-down cliffs. It had been in Brian's mind to follow her and see who was this man who had such an influence over her life, more with a view to shield her from his power than for his own gratification; but honour restrained him.

Denis Atherton was of another nature. Seeing Isolt cross the meadows at dusk, he had grown curious and followed her at a distance. He saw her meet a tall, dark stranger; he stooped behind the bushes and heard much that passed between them, and told himself that whatever secret was between them the girl did not love him. If she had done so in the past what was that to him, and a man of his nature might easily be bought off if only Isolt would listen to his (Atherton's) proposals.

He longed to catch a glimpse of the man's face, but as yet had failed. One thing he had learned, that Isolt met her strange companion every other night, and always brought him provisions of some sort and a small packet which seemed like money, and that he invariably grumbled as he counted it.

He determined to be first at the meeting-place, and on this particular night had the satisfaction of listening to the stranger's awful oaths as he waited for Isolt's arrival. She was somewhat late, and when she confronted the man her face was white and sterner than Denis had ever seen it.

"You're late, young lady. What the deuce do you mean by keeping me here so long?"

"You should be thankful I have come at all, Redmond; it was in my mind not to meet you any more—"

He interrupted her with a coarse laugh,—

"But second thoughts were best, my pretty Isolt. You would hardly care for your fine lovers to hear a certain story. It's true I shouldn't figure very well in the narrative, but that's a minor consideration. By Heaven, if you don't do as I wish I'll lay your pretty head in the dust."

Denis stirred, and could scarcely check the impulse to rush out and punish the ruffian who dared threaten the girl he loved.

"Hush!" she said in a whisper, "what was that noise?"

"A rabbit or hare passing; what a nervous fool you are! But what have you brought me to-night?"

"Not very much; you have had money in large quantities since you came here; all my savings have gone to supply your wants—I will not draw upon Gilbert."

"You talk of your petty savings as if they were thousands," roughly, and he counted over the silver she had brought discontentedly. "Fifteen-and-sixpence, all told," he said, with an oath. "What is a fellow to do with that?"

"I'm sure I don't know," in a hard voice, "and I don't care. You are better clothed, housed, and fed than you have been for five years. If you had received those things whilst in—"

"Hold your tongue," the man almost shouted, whilst Isolt regarded him with scornful eyes.

"What have you done with all the money I have brought you? How have you spent it all?"

"In cards, and dice, and wine, my lass, and I might add billiards, but, as it used to be, my luck is still against me. I have hovered about Westerton until I am sick of the beastly hole, and wish I could see my way clear of it. For five hundred down I'd go and never trouble you again."

"Oh!" Isolt said, passionately. "I wish I had the modest sum you demand! If it were double the amount you should have it, if so I could rid my life of you for ever."

"Thank you; what an affectionate child it is! For my word, Isolt, your love overwhelms me."

"If you have nothing to offer but coarse jests I had best leave you," contemptuously. "If you have anything to say, say it quickly;

It is getting late, and Gilbert will wonder where I am, and probably seek me."

"Pretty innocent! must it never be trusted alone!" then suddenly changing his tone, "look here, my girl, I want more money; I have debts of honour to pay."

She laughed out shrilly.

"That is the best joke you have made, Redmond; pray repeat it."

Even in that dim light she saw his face grow ghastly with rage, and he shook his clenched hands threateningly before her eyes. She did not flinch; she met his evil look steadily and said,—

"Do your worst, you cannot make me more unhappy than I am, and death would be a blessing."

"I can blacken your character to Denis Atherton, and I will, even at the expense of my own."

"I know," she answered, quietly, "you would stoop to any lie; but what Mr. Atherton believes would not affect me."

The listener grew angry, and wondered in his heart why Isolt was so cold to him.

"I can even go to Brian Varcoe—you see I know all the gossip of the town—I will tell him—"

"Oh! no—no!" she shrieked; "tell him nothing! I will do anything you ask, be anything, only keep our shame from him! Surely, surely you would not expose your own crime!"

He laughed, but Denis bit his lip in impotent wrath.

"Did she love Varcoe? If so, what then?"

"My dear child, you have shown your hand plainly—too plainly. You love this Varcoe—are fool enough to prefer a penniless land-surveyor to a gentleman of high birth and great fortune. There! a truce to nonsense. If you do not bring me ten pounds by to-morrow I will let all the town know the lie between us. Wherever you go for refuge I will follow, whatever friends you make I will steal from you, poison their minds, prove to them I am an ill-used man, and you—ah! you tremble and are afraid. Will you bring the money, or will you risk exposure? Yes or no? I don't want to stay on these confounded cliffs all night."

"I cannot bring you more than I have done. I have tried to spare Gilbert, hoping vainly in the end I should touch your heart. Oh, pardon, I forgot you had one only in an anatomical sense! I have failed, and now, Heaven help us—we are too feeble to stand against you."

"Right, my dear! 'Pon my word, you're coming to your senses."

And Denis wondered where he had heard that voice.

Over the cliffs sounded a merry whistle, but none of the trio heard it, and Jo passed on his way muttering to himself,—

"What am de massa doin', stooping down dare! An' sure dat is mislay Isolt; and he went on puzzled and a little troubled in his mind."

Denis rose from his crouching position. He felt the interview was drawing to a close, and it was more politic to move to a distance. He heard Redmond say,—

"Then you will give me no more!" and the answer, "I cannot," and said to himself, "I alone can help her; she will be my wife yet."

Isolt lingered a little longer with her companion.

"Tell me," she said, "what you intend doing?"

"I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed," he retorted with his mocking laugh. "For the present I intend locating myself at Number 3, Cliff-terrace, where I am sure of a cordial welcome."

"Oh! spare us that," she cried; "at least let us live respected by our fellow-townsmen. Your intemperate habits, your disregard of all social decency, will bring us to open shame. Surely I have done enough for you to win this favour!"

But the man's sinister face grew obstinate, and Isolt turned from him with repugnance and despair.

"I am going," she said, in a low voice; "do not follow me."

"Haven't the least intention of doing so; I'm going to the 'Jolly Tars,' a pretty place, my dear, at Berrydown."

Without a word she left him, his mocking good-bye sounding in her ears. It was nearly dark and she went quickly, being afraid. A little way on she met Denis.

"You are out late," he said, "may I take you home?" And she was glad of his escort, being nervous.

"Have you been to Berrydown, Miss Isolt?" he questioned. And she answered, blushing at the lie,—

"Yes. I walked further than I intended. I wished to be home before it was dark, as Gilbert will be anxious about me."

He wanted to try the effect of an experiment upon her, so he asked suddenly,—

"Did you see a strange man in the village?" In the darkness he could not see her awful pallor and her voice was steady as she answered,—

"No; and even had I done so, how should I tell him from a native!"

Full of admiration of her courage, and yet bent on confounding her if possible, he went on—

"Partly because he wears broadcloth, and partly from his freedom from dialectic speech. He is a roysterer, a gambler, and a drunkard, and yet, inconceivable as it may appear, it is said a young and pretty girl meets him frequently upon the cliffs."

Just the faintest tremor ran through her tones as she said,—

"Poor unhappy girl! she is to be pitied."

"She ought to be warned that the meetings are known, and told of the man's unworthy character."

"Probably she knows it already. I suppose the conclusion you and all others draw is that this stranger is her lover, Mr. Atherton!"

"Is or was for some motive of his own. Such a wretch would not understand the meaning of love; such a man would be quite outside the pale of human feeling, dead to all honourable instincts."

"You are right," she said with sudden passion; "his death would be a mercy to all his friends."

"If she loved him once she does not now," Denis thought triumphantly, and then spoke of indifferent things. At last they reached her home, and at the little gate she paused, and, giving him her hand, said quietly,—

"I will not ask you in to-night, for I am very tired and quite incapable of entertaining you; many thanks for your escort—good night."

He held the little hand closely.

"May I come to-morrow? Since I have been forbidden the house life has been very miserable to me. Only say yes, Isolt, and I will do my best not to offend you again."

Just a moment she hesitated, then said quietly,—

"Come if you choose, but pay your visits in the evening, because my days are very busy, and Gilbert will be glad of a companion. I am sometimes a very poor one."

His next speech seemed irrelevant.

"You are not looking well, Isolt," with unveiled tenderness.

"Oh, I am very well, but I have walked too far." Then she went in, determining that, come what would, she would meet Redmond no more; at least she owed it to herself to keep her name free from scandal.

On Sunday she was so very far from well that she did not go out, and Gilbert attended evening service alone. As soon as it was ended he hurried home, feeling a little anxious about Isolt; he took a short cut, and very quickly reached Cliff-terrace. His hand was on the gate, and he was about to enter, when somebody struck him sharply upon the shoulder, and a voice he knew too well cried,—

"What! too proud to speak to an old friend!" Sick and faint he turned to see the speaker, and cried out sharply,—

"You! you! but I knew you would come at last. Oh Heaven! what do you want of me?"

"That's a pretty welcome," laughing harshly; "in the parable the prodigal was received with open arms."

"He was penitent," sharply. "Now, tell me what you want, and let me rid myself of you, now and for ever."

"What I want is a home, and I mean to have it with you; whilst you're away I shall be a

pleasant companion for our dear Isolt. If you refuse what I ask you shall be sorry for it. I will send anonymous letters about the place, which will cause the pious people of Westerton to avoid you as if you had the plague, whilst I, from a distant place, shall hug myself in my security."

"Would you be so base as to blazon your guilt—to tell the miserable story of your wasted life?"

"What matters! None will know me, whilst I shall have ruined you. Revenge is sweet, my boy."

"Oh Heaven!" the other cried, "how can I take you to Isolt—how let you breathe the same air with her! Poor child, poor child; poor, unhappy girl! See here, Redmond, I will starve myself to supply your wants; I will work night and day, if only you will promise to leave Westerton and never return or molest us any more. You have broken your word often, but I will believe you now. I will give you one last chance to redeem your character—I will endeavour to get you some employment."

"Oh, thank you!" scornfully. "I want no employment; when I am in luck cards furnish me with a good income. Just at present I am unfortunate; now let us go in."

Gilbert's lips quivered a moment; he was not a strong man, but he urged,—

"Let her remain in ignorance, she has suffered enough already. You broke our father's heart—be merciful to her."

"It seems to me we are playing at cross-purposes. Isolt knows I am in the neighbourhood; she has met me night after night, brought me money, clothed me—how else could I present the appearance I do? She wished to keep us apart, but my affection has overcome my prudence, and here I am."

"Come in," and Gilbert groaned as he led the way into the house Isolt had made so dainty that it was the envy of all the neighbours. The girl, lying upon the couch, heard footsteps in the hall, and one struck terror to her heart. She knew it well, and knew, too, that it brought no joy to any place it entered, that sorrow and shame were always its attendants. She rose and moved towards the table, steadying herself as best she could; then the door opened and Gilbert entered, followed by a dark and sinister-looking man.

"My dear!" the former began, and, meaning, Isolt crept to him, laid her head on his breast, and said,—

"It has come at last, Gilbert. I tried to spare you; but he is strong—I so weak—I without craft, he so learned in all cunning—"

The man interrupted,—

"You are very complimentary, my dear; if you were wise you would condole me."

"And why!" cried Isolt, flashing upon him suddenly; "what have you done that we should be glad to see or welcome you again! You broke my father's heart by your brutality and crime; you dragged us lower and lower by your extravagance and sin; you crushed Gilbert's spirit, ruined his life, blighted his hopes; you changed me from a happy girl to a miserable, timid woman—you have taken all hope, all honour, all love and joy from us—are you content!"

"Silence!" he shouted; "if you were not a fool you would know better than to anger me."

"Be silent! Yes, I will, when I have spoken what is in my heart (still she clung to Gilbert). Sooner or later you will meet your punishment, and of all you have known there will be none to pity you—there is scarcely a creature who believed in you that you have not deceived and wronged. Oh! Heaven, that we must endure your presence daily—that I should pray to have you removed from us—should rejoice in your death! No," as he stepped forward, "don't threaten us, don't attempt any violence, or I will expose you publicly, although your shame should become ours."

He laughed uncomfortably, whilst his restless light eyes wandered round the room, taking in every detail of furniture and ornaments. Then he said,—

"Now look here, Isolt, you've had your say,

let me have mine. Five years I've suffered hardships you can't understand, and all the while you have lived in luxury; it's my turn now, and you had best treat me with tolerable courtesy; whatever our private life may be we won't quarrel in public. Now I'll take supper, I'm frightfully hungry."

Isolt returned to the couch, but though Gilbert took his place at the table he ate nothing, and there was a wretched silence. But at last he spoke,—

"I will not have Isolt insulted or bullied, and remember I hold a responsible position; do not endanger it by any vice or madness of yours; the first time you transgress you leave this house."

Late that night the visitor stumbled upstairs to the pretty room prepared hastily for him. Then brother and sister, as moved by a common impulse, moved nearer to each other, and Gilbert drew the pretty dark head upon his bosom.

"My girl, my poor girl!"

"Don't grieve for me," she said, gently; "your lot is worse than mine," and clung about him, sobbing bitterly, yet trying for his sake to be calm. The storm that had threatened them so long had broken upon them at last.

(To be continued.)

THE UNCLE'S SECRET.

—101—

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Come, Harold my dear nephew," repeated Mrs. Binnie, tapping the young man on the arm with her fan, "come, and allow me to present you to my friend, Miss Christie. She has heard me speak of you often."

She took his arm and drew him toward the spot where Connie stood beneath the waving palm branches.

"Is she not a beautiful girl?" she asked, as they advanced.

"Yes," replied Harold Lexmore; "the most beautiful girl that I have ever beheld."

Mrs. Binnie laughed softly, gleefully, telling herself that her "handsome nephew had fallen in love with Connie at first sight."

A strange and indescribable feeling swept through Harold Lexmore's heart as he drank in with eager gaze the full beauty of that perfect face. Where had he seen just such a proud, crimson, sensitive mouth, and such brown, velvety eyes?

At that instant Connie turned her glance in their direction, and saw him approaching her hurriedly, Mrs. Binnie leaning upon his arm.

For a single instant the room seemed whirling around Connie; the music, the lights, and the flowers seemed to clash together and rock round her as she stood there face to face with Harold Lexmore.

As in a dream she heard Mrs. Binnie go through the formula of introduction. She heard Harold Lexmore say, "I am happy to meet you Miss Christie." Then Mrs. Binnie left them alone.

Connie never remembered whether she made a reply or not.

He had looked into her eyes, heard her voice, and had not recognized her; and she told herself, with a bitter smile, that she would never betray her identity to him—never! He should never know that she was the same Connie to whom he had once been bound by a death-bed betrothal—never! He had been so glad to have the fetters broken that bound him. Of course he was Winnie's husband long since; he was, therefore, nothing to her now—less than nothing—and, quite unconsciously, her lovely face grew cold and haughty in its superb pride.

"Are you engaged for the next waltz, Miss Christie?" he asked, taking the pearl-and-gold tablet from her hand.

Connie drew back, her face paling; even her lips lost their colour. Waltz with—him! Ah, no! she could not.

How could she feel his breath upon her cheek,

the clasp of his strong arms around her, the beating of his heart, when she loved him so and knew that he was another's, and that he was lost to her for evermore?

"I should prefer dancing any other than a waltz with you, Mr. Lexmore," she said.

Harold Lexmore felt pained. Any other young lady in that grand, glittering ball-room would have been delighted to have waltzed with him, he well knew.

"May I put my name down for the next quadrille, then?" he asked, with charming grace; and as Connie could find no reasonable excuse for refusing him, she bowed a cold assent.

To her horror she found it was, after all, a waltz-quadrille. She could not escape from him when they were out on the floor together; she was obliged to go through the dance with him; yet Harold Lexmore could not help but notice how she shrank from the touch of his hand and the clasp of his arm.

"Why had this beautiful girl taken such an aversion to him at first sight?" he asked himself in the deepest wonder; he could not understand.

That one waltz quadrille undid the work of years. Connie thought she had schooled her heart against him; but love was not to be disciplined thus easily. Poor Connie realized that the Connie of twenty loved Harold Lexmore a thousand times more deeply than the Connie of seventeen had done. That was a childish, beautiful love; this was the full, passionate strength of a woman's love, the love that blesses or curses human hearts.

From that hour Harold Lexmore followed Connie about like a shadow. He took great care to place himself in every set with her. If she strolled out on the balcony, on looking up she was sure to find him near her; if she seated herself at the piano in the grand drawing-room, she would find him at her side, ready to turn the music for her.

"Why is Winnie, the wife for whom he deserted me, not with him?" Connie asked herself; then she remembered that it was not unusual for husbands to be seen at grand gatherings unaccompanied by their wives. No doubt Winnie had not chosen to come. "Why will he torture me with his presence and his soft, winning, melodious voice!" thought Connie, bitterly.

Connie had gone to the music-room to rest for a moment, expecting to find it quite deserted. A merry group of young ladies followed her there, laughingly declaring that Connie should not leave the music-room without first favouring them with a song.

"I like something sentimental—a nice song," said one young girl, glancing up coyly into her lovely face.

"What shall it be?" asked Connie, seating herself at the grand piano and running her white, slim fingers over the ivory keys.

"Only a Flower" is a charming ballad," interposed one of the young gentlemen; "won't you favour us with that, Miss Christie?"

Before Connie could reply, one of the young girls had chimed in,—

"Here is something ever so much sweeter; do sing this for us first, Miss Christie," and she placed the music on the rack before Connie.

Connie's heart gave a great throb as she read the title; she grew faint and dizzy, and it was no wonder, for every word pierced her heart like brands of fire.

Yet she must not falter—she must school her aching heart to meet every emergency.

The white fingers did not falter over the keys, the sweet, clear voice did not tremble over those words that seemed almost to have been written for her.

As the last words fell from Connie's white lips, Harold Lexmore, who had been standing by her side, leaned over to turn the music for her, and in so doing his hand brushed against the white one gliding over the ivory keys. In an instant the music ceased. Connie raised her eyes, meeting Harold Lexmore's gaze bent full upon her face. Her voice failed her, the great chandelier above her head seemed to suddenly darken, shutting out from her gaze the faces

around her, the words of the song died on her lips, and she fell backward into Harold Lexmore's arms in a dead faint.

It was but the work of an instant to gather the slender figure in his strong arms and bear her from the heated music-room out into the fragrant coolness of the night-wind in the garden.

The young girls scattered in all directions in search of their hostess, Felicia Dale, while the young men hastily went in search of a doctor.

Thus it happened that for one brief moment Harold Lexmore found himself alone in the starlit fragrant garden clasping the unconscious form in his strong arms.

The beautiful golden head rested heavily against his shoulder, the lovely white face—whiter than the petals of a lily, with the long curling lashes over the rounded cheeks, lay against his throbbing breast.

Harold Lexmore was not a marble statue, he was only human, with a warm, passionate, impulsive heart beating in his breast.

Can you wonder that he clasped the slender form close to his throbbing heart, murmuring,—

"My beautiful darling! how sweet and lovely you are!"

The next instant he had bent his handsome head and kissed the lovely mouth.

At that instant Connie opened her eyes.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONNIE struggled from the clasp of Harold Lexmore's arms with a cry of dismay and looked around her in bewilderment.

"You fainted in the music-room, Miss Christie," explained Harold Lexmore, "and I brought you out into the cool air, while the rest went in search of the hostess and a doctor. You are better now I hope?"

"Thank you—yes, I am better; the room was too warm for me, I remember," returned Connie, quickly.

At that instant Felicia Dale came flying breathlessly down the rose-bordered path.

"Why my dear," she cried, clasping Connie in her arms, "what a scare you have given me! What caused you to faint?"

Again Connie murmured something about "the heat of the room;" but Felicia Dale, looking keenly into her face, knew that it was not the heat.

Ere the doctor who had been summoned made his appearance, Connie had returned to her anxious friends in the ball-room, and the festivities of the evening went on as before.

"I must control myself better than this," Connie thought. "The sound of his voice, the touch of his hand, the glance from his eyes must not agitate me so." It seemed to the girl that the whole world must read her secret.

Mrs. Binnie was too wise to mention her nephew's name to Connie, lest she should remember how earnestly she had striven to make a match between them three years before, and Connie was too proud to ask Mrs. Binnie about Winnie. Connie had been too confused to notice that Mrs. Binnie had introduced Harold Lexmore as her nephew. She believed him a friend, nothing more.

Connie was still under the delusion that young Doctor Jolly, of Roebank, was the one referred to when Mrs. Binnie mentioned "her nephew."

A week later the Dales took up their summer quarters at the Oriental Hotel, Connie accompanied them, and, to her dismay, she found that Harold Lexmore was sojourning there for the summer too. Still, Winnie was not with him.

Again Harold Lexmore sought and improved every opportunity of cultivating beautiful Miss Christie's acquaintance; there was a certain dash of romance about it, owing to the fact that the girl seemed to avoid him so.

Harold Lexmore was by no means vain, yet he was not blind to his own accomplishments and the favour in which he was held by the charming belles who graced the beach.

It was quite useless for bewitching young girls to single him out as the handsomest and best

catch of the season. He was proof against all their pretty arts of coquetry, their coy blushes and blandishments. It was soon whispered about that he had no eyes or ears for any one save Miss Christie. He was not to be won, that was evident.

"Why does he follow me about so persistently? Does he suspect who I am, and is he waiting for an opportunity to say: 'Why are you masquerading here under the name of Miss Christie?' You are greatly changed, but despite those changes, I have discovered that you are Constance Culver."

No thought that she had fascinated, charmed him, ever occurred to poor Connie.

"How he must abhor the very memory of that hapless Connie who came so near separating him from the girl he loved!" she told herself.

It often occurred to her to warn those pretty girls that the idol they were so eager to worship was married, that he had no right to give to the world the impression that he was single—free to woo and win them.

Felicia Dale watched handsome Harold Lexmore's strange wooing of Connie with amusement. Once she tried to expostulate with her, but the girl turned such a pale, pained face toward her that she cried out in wonder and alarm.

"Do not mention Harold Lexmore's name to me, Felicia," she said, in a quick, stifled voice. "I hate him!" and before Felicia Dale could recover from the astonishment of witnessing this vehement outburst of passion from the usually quiet Connie, the girl had quitted the room.

That day a strange, reckless resolve came to Connie. She would cease avoiding Harold Lexmore. Why should she fear him!

That afternoon when Harold Lexmore joined a group of young girls on the seashore, among whom was Connie, he noticed with a thrill of pleasure that she did not turn and walk abruptly away as usual, and he flattered himself that she was beginning to look more kindly upon his patient devotion.

The group of chattering young girls made way for him. He flung himself down on the white beach at Connie's feet, but the graceful golden head, after a slight inclination, was turned proudly away from the face gazing up into her own.

"I want you to settle a dispute for us. If you will, Mr. Lexmore," said a bewitching little blonde, laying a little mite of a white hand in a half-careless, half-caressing way on his arm. "I am trying to induce these timid girls to take a dip in the sea with me. I have Miss Christie half-persuaded already. If she goes the rest will follow; now add your entreaties to mine and tell them the sea will be delightful this terribly warm afternoon."

Harold Lexmore looked up in alarm. "I think Miss Christie is quite right in hesitating to trust the water to-day. There is danger in its wooing. Do you see how high the breakers dash on the shore? I have been told it betokens a swift, treacherous under-current."

"Oh, how cruel of you, Mr. Lexmore, to say that!" pouted the little blonde belle, who was quite an expert swimmer and longed to show her dexterity in battling with the huge waves. "Of course your opinion will decide Miss Christie, and my arguing of an hour's duration has all been in vain."

"I think not," returned Connie, very quietly. "I have made up my mind to go into the sea with you."

The little blonde belle looked delighted; Harold Lexmore looked annoyed.

"Why do you wish to court danger, Miss Christie?" he asked in a low voice. "You can see for yourself how heavy the sea is. I beg of you do not be tempted into it."

Connie crested her beautiful golden head, looking down at him with cold, proud eyes. She would have gone now, even if death itself stared her in the face.

"You will promise that you will not go, Miss Christie?" he pleaded, eagerly.

"Why do you take so much interest in this matter?" asked Connie, sharply.

"The words, 'Because I love you so madly,' sprung to his lips, but he forced them back

—this was neither the time nor the place to utter them.

He smiled, and a tender look came into his fine blue eyes.

"Would I not stretch out hands to save a rash child from rushing headlong into danger? Or turn aside from its course a bird that was seemingly bent upon fluttering straight into a trap? You are like the child or the bird; you must be saved from your own folly."

With a haughty toss of her golden curls, and a sneer on her crimson lips, Connie picked up her book and lace sunshade and walked haughtily away. Harold Lexmore could not tell whether she meant to heed his warning or not.

A half hour later, as he paced the verandah of the hotel, looking out seaward, he saw a group of bathers battling with the breakers.

His heart almost stood still; he recognised the foremost one upon whose golden head the sunlight fell. It was Miss Christie.

How madly the white-capped waves dashed over the four young girls who clung to the ropes with their slender white hands!

"They have found the water much too rough for them, just as I told them," he muttered, strolling leisurely down the beach.

Connie saw him coming toward them, and a reckless, defiant light flamed into her brown, flashing eyes.

"I will show him how little I think of his warning," she thought, striking boldly out ahead of her companions.

It was a fatal move; all in an instant she realised it; the great waves carried her far out of reach of the protecting ropes, and in a single instant more the treacherous under-current had dragged her down.

Hoarse cries echoed from hundreds of throats as the horrified spectators realised what had happened. Before a life-boat could be put out the girl would be swept out to sea.

But in that moment of horror a young man had torn off his coat and sprung into the waves to her rescue. It was Harold Lexmore!

CHAPTER XXIX.

In an instant the greatest excitement prevailed. "Was the young man mad to risk his life so recklessly among the wild, dashing breakers?" the spectators asked themselves.

They strained their eyes and held their breath. It certainly looked as if two lives would be lost instead of one. Prayer went up from women's hearts; men muttered, "God strengthen his arm;" and through the moments that followed they watched with bated breath, the intense silence broken only by the loud, hoarse murmur of the breakers.

Harold Lexmore was young and strong, and an expert swimmer; but the odds were fearfully against him. He struck out bravely for the shining mark that was drifting out so swiftly to sea.

"Courage! Courage!" he shouted to her. "I will save you or die with you!"

Connie heard him, and the words infused her with new life.

A moment later he turned and struck boldly for the shore, holding the form of the insensible girl.

Five minutes later, amid lusty cheers and glad cries of women, Harold Lexmore laid Connie down upon the white sand of the beach among the dunes.

From that hour handsome Harold Lexmore was the hero and idol of all the ladies, hundreds of whom flocked to the hotel to catch one glimpse of the noble young man who had done such an heroic deed.

It was a week before Connie was sufficiently recovered to thank him for saving her life. It was evening; the chandeliers were lighted, throwing a soft, mellow light over the marble halls and vast parlours, and out upon the stretch of beach beyond, lying so white in the clear, bright starlight.

Connie saw him out on the verandah, pacing to and fro, smoking a cigar.

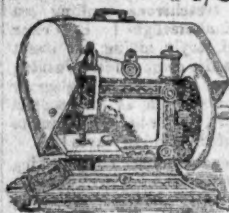
DOES YOUR HEAD ACHE?

"KAPUTINE" cures instantly.

Enclose stamped addressed envelope to "K. KAPUTINE, LTD., HUDDERSFIELD, for free samples, with name of nearest agent.

SWIFT SEWING MACHINE.

WHY PAY MORE? 14/6 WHY PAY MORE?



Every Machine warranted. This newly-invented machine (The Swift) is the wonder of the age, and a marvel of mechanism in producing a thoroughly reliable Family Sewing Machine, suitable for Dressmaking and all kinds of Family Sewing equally as well as those costing 4 guineas. Easy instruction book and complete set of accessories for 14s. 6d., with handsome cover, 2s. extra. Write at once for illustrated circular, or call and see the machine at work. Sent to any address, enclose stamp, upon receipt of post-office order. Extra needles 6d. and 1s. per packet.

Address, H. LEIGH and CRAWFORD, 31, Brooke Street, Holborn, London, E.C.

Wanted immediately (everywhere), Trustworthy Persons of EITHER SEX. Work easy, constant, and well paid.—For reply, enclose stamped addressed envelope. EVANS, WATTS & Co. (p. 1000), Merchants, Birmingham.

"DRUNKENNESS"

CURED. A lady having cured her husband severely of intemperate habits will gladly send particulars of the remedy to anyone forwarding stamped envelope.—Write privately Mrs. L. R. BARRING-TON, 4, Featherstone Buildings, London, W.C. Powderage notice.

TOWLE'S PENNYROYAL PILLS FOR FEMALES.

QUICKLY CORRECT ALL IRREGULARITIES, REMOVE ALL OBSTRUCTIONS, and relieve the distressing symptoms so prevalent with females. Boxes, 1/3 & 2/6 (contains three times the quantity) of all Chemists. Sent anywhere on receipt of 15 or 24 stamps, by E. T. TOWLE & Co., Manufacturers, Dryden St., Nottingham. 27, Beccles of Institutions, Dispensing and Wholesale.

AN HONEST MEDICINE.

DR. DAVIS'S FAMOUS FEMALE PILLS. THE MOST EFFECTUAL ON EARTH.

NO IRREGULARITY CAN RESIST THEM. 6d., 1s., 1 1/2d., 2s., 3d., 4s., 6d.; extra strong, 11s. Sent free from observation by

Dr. Davis, 309, Portobello Road, London, W.

Dr. Davis's little book for MARRIED WOMEN most invaluable, sent free on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope.

WORDS OF WISDOM, MARRIAGE AND COURTSHIP.

A Pamphlet of advice and information for all who are married and those who are about to marry. It is illustrated and contains advice and information worth HUNDREDS OF POUNDS. Post free, stamped envelope.

M. PAUL, 10, BOOKSELLERS' ROW, STRAND, LONDON.

EXQUISITE MODELS. PERFECT FIT. GUARANTEED WEAR.

THE Y & N PATENT DIAGONAL SEAM CORSETS.

Patented in England and on the Continent.

Will not split in the seams nor bear in the back.

Made in White, Black, and all the Fashionable Colours, and Shaded in Italian Cloth, Satin, and Coutil.

4/11, 5/11, 6/11, 7/11

per pair and upwards.

THREE GOLD MEDALS.

Sold by the principal Drapers and Ladies' Outfitters.



Silently she crossed the verandah, and stood before him like a vision in her clinging dress of soft, fleecy white.

"I am come to thank you for what you have done for me, Mr. Lexmore," she said, with an unconscious flutter in her voice, and extending both her hands. "I thank you so much. Words cannot express my great indebtedness! Why did you do it? It might have cost you your own life. Oh, why did you do so much for me, Mr. Lexmore!"

He took both her trembling hands.

"We will walk down on the beach together, and I will tell you why," he answered.

How smooth the treacherous, smiling sea looked under the brilliant starlight! How clear the silver moon looked, coyly hiding her sweet face behind the soft, white clouds, like a blushing bride behind her white veil! What a glamour was thrown over land and sea, as they walked silently along in the soft, tender light, listening to the musical murmur of the sighing waves!

Suddenly Harold Lexmore stood still, looking down into the lovely face, his hand involuntarily closing and holding prisoner the little trembling one that lay on his arm.

"You ask me why I risked my life to save yours! I will answer you now: It was because I love you with all the strength of my heart—all the strength of my soul! Without you, life would be a blank—with you, it would be a paradise! I love you with the mightiest love man ever felt for woman—a love that would brave all the dangers of earth and sea to win you!"

Her beautiful face was turned towards the water; her eyes were filled with a soft, dreamy light. He took courage from them, and drew nearer to her.

"My darling," he murmured, softly, stealing one arm quietly around her, "I lay my life and love at your feet. You hold my heart in your hands. Tell me my love has not been in vain."

It is to be wondered at that in the sweet delirium of that moment Connie forgot the terrible gulf yawning between them—forgot the past, forgot the face of Winnie, remembering only her great passionate love for the man who was clasping her so tenderly to his throbbing heart—the love that was the other half of her soul—the sweet love that was a part of every heart-throb!

Ah, if she might but clasp her arms around him just once!—lay her head upon his breast one fleeting moment, then die before the moment of parting came. It was not much, only one moment. There would be no harm in listening to those sweet, rapturous words—to feel his breath upon her cheek, his arm clasping her for one poor little minute, when she loved him so well—loved him better than life itself!

"You do love me," whispered Harold Lexmore. "I can read it in your sweet face. Look up at me, my shy, beautiful darling, and tell me so in words."

Her face was so near his, the proud, bright eyes were all gentle; they only looked timid love into his; there was no reproach in them. Was it to be wondered at that this handsome wooer grew bolder and more daring—clasped her in his arms as though nothing should ever part them, kissing the sweet lips, the lovely brown eyes, and waving golden hair, and little trembling hands, and that the sweet passion maddened him!

She would not say, "Harold, I love you," as he pleaded with her to do, but she had not rebuked him when he clasped her in his arms. The beautiful head drooped until it rested on his shoulder, as they stood on the white bench together, listening to the low, musical murmur of the waves, and he was unutterably content.

For one brief moment—five—ten—as they stood there, they forgot the past, the future, remembering only the present—this sweet dream of love—such a beautiful, beautiful dream!

He clasped her in his arms, murmuring how well he loved her—that sweet love story of which young hearts never tire, and which grows sweeter each time it is repeated.

What would he say if he knew that she was Connie! she wondered. It was strange that in that moment of supreme happiness she should

forget that such a person as Winnie had ever come between them—forget her very existence.

In that moment of happiness Harold's mind had flown back to the terrace of Lexmore Hall, and to the white face of that other one who had loved him—loved him so well that she had gone down to her death to sever the fetters of that betrothal that bound her to him.

It was strange that in the presence of this beautiful girl whom he had learned to love so passionately, his mind always went back regretfully to poor little Connie—sweet, pretty Connie. Not that there was anything in common between them. Connie was only a simple, loving school-girl with a dark, pippy face crowned in masses of brown locks. This beautiful, peerless woman was taller by half a head; she had much the same brown eyes, but her hair, unlike Connie's was golden—gloriously golden as the sunlight.

It occurred to him that he ought to tell her the story of sweet, simple Connie, to whose memory he had been so true. Surely she would not be jealous of that other love; she was too noble for that.

"My darling," he murmured, "you have admitted that you love me; would it grieve you to know that I am not entirely heart whole?"

With a wailing, piteous cry, she tore herself from his arms.

(To be continued.)

WHEN I MET YOU.

LIFE's lesser lights went out when I met you,
And left one star illumining the sky,
That still shines on, serene and pure and high,
And brightening all the sordid earth to view:
LIFE's lesser lights went out when I met you!

When I met you life's lesser lights went out.
Ambition sank beneath the dusky brim
Of tender thoughts, and lay there drowned and dim.

Fame's heralds, stricken blind, were put to rout—
When I met you life's lesser lights went out!

When I met you went out life's lesser lights!
A hundred feelings blended into one.

No more I wander thoughtless in the sun—
God pity me when come the starless nights!
When I met you went out life's lesser lights.

SHOPPING BY POST.—Shopping by post is quite as interesting and far more profitable than the old style of making one's purchases. Nowadays so many manufacturers endeavour to deal directly with the public. In this way the profits of three or four middlemen are avoided, and the result is that the buyer can obtain articles at prices hitherto deemed impossible. The Manchester and Bradford Warehouse Company, No. 41, Thomas-street, Manchester, are making tremendous efforts in that direction. Their marvellous parcel, or "Lucky Bundle," is a wonder; it is only when you consider you are dealing direct with the manufacturer that you can understand how they sell the goods at the price. Their "Lucky Bundle" contains a splendid habit cloth dress, fifty inches wide; a good and serviceable tweed, neat pattern, will make a splendid walking-dress; another serviceable serge, for seaside or strong wear; a dress length of printed cambric cloth, for home wear; and remnants of beautiful material for blouses, &c., to the amount of ten yards. However they manage to sell this parcel for 21s., carriage paid, is a marvel; but they do so, and promise to return the money if you are not satisfied. They do not, however, confine themselves entirely to dress materials, and our lady readers would do well to write for their catalogue, containing, as it does, a wonderful variety of designs in underclothing, from which the most fastidious cannot fail to find something to please.

"THE HUMAN HAIR: Its Restoration and Preservation." A Practical Treatise on Baldness, Greyness, Superfluous Hair, &c. 40 pages. Post-free six stamps, from Dr. HORN, Hair Specialist, Bournemouth.

EPPS'S COCOAINÉ

COCOA-NIB EXTRACT.

(Tea-like).

The choicest roasted nibs (broken-up beans) of the natural Cocoa on being subjected to powerful hydraulic pressure, give forth their excess of oil, leaving for use a finely flavoured powder—"Cocaine," a product which, when prepared with boiling water, has the consistency of tea, of which it is now, with many, beneficially taking the place. Its active principle being a gentle nerve stimulant, supplies the needed energy without unduly exciting the system. Sold only in Tins, labelled:—

JAMES EPPS & CO., Limited,
Homœopathic Chemists, London.

TO LADIES.

HEALTHY, WEALTHY & WISE.

An interesting little COPYRIGHT TREATISE, which should be carefully read by every English Wife. Sent FREE on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope. Apply M.D., 217, Graham Road, London, N.E. Please name this Paper.

TOOTH-ACHE

CURED INSTANTLY BY

BUNTER'S
Prevents Decay, Cures
Extraction, Sleepless Nights
Prevented.
Neuralgia Headaches and all Nerve
Pains removed by BUNTER'S
NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 10d.

£20
TOBACCONISTS COMMENCING.
See illus. Guide and Catalogue (3d. paper), 21.
"How to open a Cigar Store, from £25 to £2,000."
TOBACCONISTS' OUTFITTING CO., 106, Euston
Road, London. (Over 60 years' reputation.)
Manager, H. MYERS.

OTTEY'S STRONG FEMALE PILLS.

Are twice as efficacious as any others, and always quickly and certainly relieve. Greatly superior to Bell's and Pennyroyal. Invaluable to women.

Post free for 14 and 35 stamps from THOMAS OTTEY, Chemist, Burton-on-Trent. Please mention LONDON READER.

GREY HAIR NECROCEINE.



(REGISTERED.)
Stains Grey Hair, Whiskers, Eyebrows any shade desired. Does not stain the Skin. Is applied in a few minutes. It is Harmless, Washable, Lasting, and Restores the Colour to the Root, making detection impossible, and is undoubtedly the Cleanest and Best Hair Stain in the World. No. 1, Light Brown; No. 2, Golden; No. 3, Dark Brown; No. 4, Black. Sent secretly packed, by post, 1s. 3d., 2s. 3d., 3s. 3d., 5s., and 10s.

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE SENT WITH EACH BOTTLE.
Write for unsolicited Testimonials.

M. LEWIS & CRAWFORD, 31, BROOKE ST., HOLBORN, LONDON, E.C.

KEATING'S POWDER

DESTROYS
BUGS
FLEAS
MOths
BETTER

TINS 3^d 6^d & 1^s

LADIES' APIOL AND STEEL PILLS.

A FRENCH REMEDY FOR ALL IRREGULARITIES. Superseding Pennyroyal, Bitter Apple, and Pill Cochine. Price 4s. 6d. post-free. Obtainable only from MARTIN, Pharmaceutical Chemist, Southampton.

FACETIÆ.

LITTLE SISTER: "What's the difference 'tween 'lectricity an' 'lightnin'?" Little Brother: "You don't pay nothin' fur lightnin'."

CRITIC: "The hero and the villain had a duel last night on the stage." Friend: "Who got the worst of it?" Critic: "The audience."

CONCHA: "Now, there is a cigar that I can conscientiously recommend." Bouquet: "If it is all the same to you, I'd rather have one you can conscientiously smoke."

RESIDENT: "Think of commencing business, eh! Seems to me you are rather young for a family physician." Young Doctor: "Yes, but—er—I shall only doctor children at first."

MR. SPARKS: "Sir, I love your daughter so that I cannot live without her." Old Gruffy: "Good! Then go away somewhere and die. There's another loaf off my mind."

HOSTESS (at informal): Have they found something to talk about at last? Host: "Yes." Hostess: "Thank goodness!" Host: "No, I believe it is somebody's badness."

"Pa, can you tie a knot in this cord?" "Yes; of course." "Can you tie a knot in any cord?" "Yes." "Can you tie a knot in your spinal cord?" "Johnnie, go to bed and keep still."

"So you are the music-teacher that answered my advertisement?" "Yes, sir." "Well, sit down there and play of couple of duets, so that I can see what you can do."

VETERAN: "So you fought all through the war, did you?" Blobbs: "Yes." Veteran: "I did not know you were in the war." Blobbs: "I wasn't. I was at home with my wife."

SHE: "Did you ever have your fortune told?" He (with great presence of mind): "Yes; and I was assured that the woman I married would die within six weeks after the wedding." Then he had a chance to breathe easy again.

"Oh, deah!" sighed Chollie. "I wish champagne was as common as beach!" "Then you would just float in it!" asked the common person! "Deah me, no! I would not drink it at all. It goes to my head so."

SUPERINTENDENT OF Lunatic Asylum: "What's that woman howling about?" Attendant: "She doesn't like her strait-jacket." "Does she want it taken off?" "Yes. She wants one with puffed sleeves."

MR. GOULIN: "I dreamed last night—aw—that you and I were mawried—aw—Miss Amy. Miss Temper: "You call that a dream, do you?" Mr. Goulin: "Yaws, of course." Miss Temper: "If I had dreamed that I should call it a nightmare."

"I'm all in the dark about how these bills are to be paid," said Mr. Hardup to his wife. "Well, Henry," said she, as she pulled out a yellow one, and laid it on the top of the pile, "you will be if you don't pay that one, for that's the gas bill."

DOCTOR (after spraying the lady's throat): "Madam, it is a pleasure to treat you—you've got such a fine control of your tongue." The Patient's Husband: "Here, let's have your bill. It's evident you don't know what you're talking about."

MISTRESS: "Oh, Bridget, Bridget! What an awful numbakill you are! You've put the potatoes on the table with the skins on, right in front of our visitors, too. You—you—what shall I call you?" Bridget (affably): "Call me 'Agnes,' if ye like, mum; 'tis me other name."

WAITER: "Very sorry, sah, but we haven't any veal. Veal is mighty scarce dis time of year, an' we haven't had no veal for a week. Can I bring you anything else, sah?" Guest (hastily): "Yes; double order of chicken salad."

THE COURT: "You have been convicted of perjury. What have you to say why sentence should not be pronounced upon you according to law?" Prisoner: "I'll tell you what I'll do, judge. I'm ready to take all that testimony back, just to square things."

Mrs. FLIGHTY: "They say the woman who deliberates is lost." Mr. Flighty: "Yes—probably extinct."

TOM: "He's some furrin' nobleman a-travellin' incognito." Dick: "What's that?" "It's when a man changes himself into what he ain't, an' expect's everyone to know him as he isn't."

"I RODE in the carriage with the widower," said the cook, on her return from the obsequies of a friend, and then added, "He said the funeral would have been nothing without me."

"WHY are you staring at me like that?" Irritably asked the young lord of the money-lender. "Because you are an object of interest to me, my lord," replied the money-lender.

MR. ROONEY: "So yer poor bye, Mike, was shut up fer loife, Missis McCafferty. Sure, that do be a long stintence!" Missis McCafferty: "Yis, Mistor Rooney, but he do be that delicate in hilt I don't think he'll live ter complete it."

SHE: "Our house was burned last night." Her Friend: "Gracious! Did you have a narrow escape?" She: "Narrow! Well, I should say! Why, I didn't have time to find my silk and lace night-gown and had to come out in a street dress."

HE: "Would you like to look at a beautiful ring?" She (blushing): "I—yes—that is, I wouldn't mind looking at one." He: "Let us go to the window and look at it. There is a beauty round the moon to-night." And she hated him ever after.

PRACTICAL FATHER: "I want to buy a watch for my boy—the cheapest you have." Honest Dealer: "I'm afraid I can't warrant the cheap ones to keep very good time." Practical Father: "Oh, that doesn't matter. Just make it so that he can open the back of the case."

A COUNTRY curate, calling on the great lady of the village, introduced his newly-married wife as a "poor thing, madam, but mine own;" whereupon the lady, looking on the curate severely, replied: "Your wife ought to have introduced you as 'a poorer thing, but mine own.'"

SLAVEY: "Missis see the milk's more than 'arf water, an' she'll have to deal sumwares else if 'tain't no better." Milkman: "Well, my dear, you must tell your missis that I'm very sorry, but them cows of mine will eat damp grass, and I can't perwent 'em this weather."

TEACHER: "Can you tell me in what year Cesar invaded Britain?" Pupil: "Yes, m." Teacher: "What year was it?" Pupil: "You can't expect me to answer two questions in succession. That question belongs to the next in class."

"WHEN I am rich," he said, haughtily, "I will return and taunt you with the opportunity you have missed." "When you are rich," she answered, calmly, "I trust you will offer to pay for the broken leg of that spindle-legged gilt chair." And he went forth with a hollow groan.

WORKMAN: "Mr. Brown, I should like to ask you for a small rise in my wages. I have just been married." Employer: "Very sorry, my dear man, but I can't help you. For accidents which happen to our workmen outside the factory the company is not responsible."

"DID I understand you to say that you didn't have any company in the kitchen while I was out, Katie?" "Yis, mum; that's what I said." "But I smell the tobacco from a pipe all through the house." "Yis, mum; the policeman was in for half an hour, mum; but we were in the parlour."

A GENTLEMAN was limping along Princess-street, Edinburgh, one morning, when a friend accosted him. "Hallo!" said he, "what's the matter? Are you lame?" "Ay, temporarily, temporarily," was the reply. "The fact is, I went home sober last night, and my faithful watchdog gipped me by the leg."

MANAGER: "I wish to congratulate you. You have managed to draw a picture of absolutely consummate repulsiveness of your villain." Author: "Thanks, awfully! But the compliment is due to my better-half. It is a description of me by my wife when I refused to buy her a new bonnet."

A WOMAN was once pursuing her fugitive cow down a lane when she called out to some one in front, "Man, turn my cow." The man took no notice, and allowed the cow to pass. When she came up she said: "Man, why did you not turn my cow?" He replied: "Woman, I am not a man; I am a magistrate."

GERMAN CORPORAL (to soldier): "Why is the blade of the sabre curved instead of straight?" Private: "It is curved in order to give more force to the blow." Corporal: "Humbly! The sabre is curved so as to fit the scabbard. If it was straight, how would you get it into the crooked scabbard, blockhead!"

MILLIONAIRE: "You ask for the hand of my daughter. You are a journalist, I believe, and journalist, I am told, can scarcely earn their salt." Young Editor (with dignity): "You mistake, sir. I am a newspaper man." "Oh! Keep a newspaper shop, I presume. Good paying business! Take her, my son, and be happy."

LIZETTE: "Is it a nice place ye have, Marie?" Marie (a new arrival): "Nice enough, but it's baying me underhandin' phy they do make me do such queer things." Lizette: "Quare, Marie?" Marie: "Yis, sure; ivery mornin' the missus talls me to swape the doost from the flure, an' phin I'm done, she gives me a rag and makes me shoe the doost back to the flure agin."

MAUD: "Oh Ethel! and what did you say to him when he proposed to you? Did you say what you said you were going to the other day? That was a noble speech, just suited to crush the boldest man. And did he slink away like a whipped dog?" Ethel: "Well, not exactly. You see, I did not say just that. I—I—well—er—er—well, you see I said 'Yes.'"

OLD LADY: "I'm afraid your story of your sudden bereavement by your wife's death a fortnight ago and your children's illness is not quite the truth." Tramp (hurt): "Not true! Look 'e 'ere, lady; I've been in this unfort'nate persuasion for more nor five year, and 'ave said the same thing 'undreds of times, and you're the first as ever doubted my word afore!"

THE other evening two gentlemen were standing talking at the door of a house in Leeds, when a newsboy came up. "Let me see," said the master of the house benevolently, "I believe you are the boy I bought the paper of yesterday, when I didn't have change. I owe you a half-penny—here it is." Newsboy (who wasn't the boy): "Never mind, mister; keep it for yer honesty!"

A NEWLY MARRIED lady who recently graduated from Girton College is not well posted about household matters. She said to her grocer not long since, "I bought three or four hams here a couple of months ago, and they were very fine. Have you any more like them?" "Yes, ma'am," said the grocer. "There are ten of those hams hanging up there." "Are you sure they are all off the same pig?" "Yes, ma'am." "Then I'll take three of them."

THE lesson was from the Prodigal Son, and the teacher was dwelling on the character of the elder brother. "But amidst all the rejoicing," he said, "there was one to whom the preparation of the feast brought no joy, to whom the Prodigal's return gave no pleasure, but only bitterness; one who did not approve of the feast being held, and who had no wish to attend it. Now can any of you tell me who this was?" There was a breathless silence, followed by a vigorous cracking of thumbs, and then from a dozen sympathetic little genuses came the chorus, "Please, sir, it was the fatted calf!"

SLIMPURSE (who has been accepted by Miss Wealthy, without inquiries as to his financial standing): "I wonder, my darling, if your parents will give their consent?" Miss Wealthy (thoughtfully): "Mama has always been very particular about the moral character of young men I associate with, and I'm afraid she'll ask a good many questions." Mr. Slimpurse (joyfully): "Oh, I can get references from half a dozen ministers." Miss Wealthy (delighted): "That's splendid! Then after that all you'll have to do will be to get references from half a dozen bankers, and you'll catch pa."

SOCIETY.

At the Diamond Jubilee Procession, the bonnet worn by the Queen was liberally adorned with diamonds.

If the Prince of Wales is able to return from the Continent in time for Doncaster races, he will again be the guest of Lord Crewe at Fryton Hall, near Pontefract, and the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire and Lord and Lady Londonderry will be included in the house-party.

According to Dutch law the Queen of Holland comes of age when she has completed her eighteenth year, which will be on the 31st of August, 1898. She will then take the reins of government into her own hands, but it is expected that no marriage will be definitely arranged for her until she is at least nineteen.

The Duchess of Cumberland will pay only a brief visit to Denmark this year in consequence of the precarious health of her eldest son, Prince George of Hanover. The Duchess will spend the first fortnight of September at Fredensborg, and during her visit to King Christian and Queen Louise the Duke of Cumberland will go to Schratzenau, his hunting lodge in the Tyrol.

The Duke of Sparta, the Crown Prince of Greece, is very unlike his brothers and sisters. He is said to resemble his Russian grandfather in character. He is reserved, observant, cultivated, and cautious. He not only speaks, but he writes familiarly Greek, German, English, Russian, Danish, and French. On his marriage, the Duke was voted an income of £1,000 a-year. He and the Duchess have a pretty country house at Morea, but both he and his wife profess to prefer town life.

It is expected that two Royal weddings will take place at Fredensborg in September—that of Prince Christian, eldest son of the Crown Prince, to the Duchess Alexandrina of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, daughter of the late Grand Duke Frederick, and granddaughter of the Grand Duke Michel Nicolaevitch; and that of Princess Ingeborg, second daughter of the Crown Prince, and Prince Charles of Sweden, third son of King Oscar. It is reported at Copenhagen that Princess Thyra, third daughter of the Crown Prince, will shortly be betrothed to the Hereditary Prince of Wied, who will inherit his father's vast estates, and also a considerable portion of the immense fortune which came to his mother, the Princess of Wied, from her father, Prince Frederick of the Netherlands.

The Queen of Denmark will celebrate her eightieth birthday on September 7th, when there is to be a great family gathering at Fredensborg Castle, including the Emperor and Empress of Russia, the Empress Dowager, the King and Queen of the Hellenes, the King of Sweden, with the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, the Landgrave and the Landgravine of Hesse, and Prince and Princess Frederick of Schaumburg-Lippe. The King and Queen of Denmark will reside during August and September at Fredensborg, which has been closed since the autumn of 1893, and there will be a large family party during their stay. Fredensborg is an immense house, with beautiful gardens, and the place is surrounded by vast beech-forests. The demesne slopes to the shore of the picturesque Erom Lake, and the neighbouring forests afford the best shooting in Denmark.

The Queen's Maids of Honour all had Jubilee costumes made alike in white silk chiffon combined with bengaline silk, and beautifully trimmed with pale red and blue lace. The three-gored ekirt makes up in five cut in narrow-width materials. The deep chiffon flounce gathers on just below the waist with a slight heading, and the hem is finished with a ruche. A bow of wide watered blue ribbon, with long ends, falls from the right shoulder, and a band of draped red finishes the waist. The full sleeve puff is gaged through the forearm and back of arm, and a wide, graduated pleated frill of lace, forming points all round, trims the neck. A little fulness of chiffon is gathered on the upper part of the skirt to meet the ruched heading, and the bodice has the fulness arranged upon a lining foundation shaped in three sections.

STATISTICS.

As a rule, a man's hair turns gray five years sooner than a woman's.

ON an average an Englishman is 14lb. heavier than a Frenchman.

THERE are 12,000 cabs and 2,500 omnibuses in London.

It is said that if the earth's atmosphere were suddenly increased in thickness to 700 miles, the sun could not penetrate it, and the earth would soon be wrapped in ice.

THERE were only five hundred miles of underground wire in London in 1869; there are now thirteen thousand miles. In 1869 there were five and a-half miles of pneumatic tubes, compared with forty miles now.

GEMS.

WOMEN desire sympathy; men prefer help.

IDLENESS is only the refuge of weak minds, and the holiday of fools.

THERE can be no social beauty where disorder prevails, no national beauty where law is set at naught, no beauty of life where the true ends of life are disregarded.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

MAYER D'HOTEL SAUCE.—Knead the desired quantity of mellow table butter with finely chopped parsley and lemon juice. Use it unmelted with different preparations.

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE.—Make a nice biscuit dough, only put in a little more shortening; roll quite thin in two pieces; spread melted butter on the top of each piece; bake in a hot oven; put on berries and cream, the same as the one made with cake.

BREAKFAST BRICQUE.—One pint of warm water, one egg, two tablespoonfuls of sugar, half a cup of yeast, two tablespoonfuls of melted butter; pour to make a sponge. When light put in soda the size of a bean. Set between three and four P.M., and mould just before going to bed. Cut in shape and place in tins to rise. Five or ten minutes will bake them in the morning.

PICKLED CAULIFLOWER.—Break the heads in pieces, according to their natural divisions. After washing thoroughly, boil in salted water for five minutes, drain off, throw into cold water and drain thoroughly, and when dry place in jars or bottles. Boil some white vinegar with sugar, cayenne pepper, and spices to taste, strain and pour scalding over the cauliflower; when cold, cork tightly and tie over with bladder.

SURPRISE CUSTARD.—Cut a small portion of stale sponge cake into thin slices, spread them with currant jelly or preserves, put two pieces together like sandwiches and lay them on a dish. Make a soft custard and pour it over the cake while hot. For the custard use one quart of milk, six eggs, six level tablespoonfuls of white sugar. Put the milk in a tin pail and set it in boiling water. Pour in the eggs and sugar and stir until it thickens. Flavour as desired.

A Dainty SUPPER DISH.—Cut some boiled potatoes into slices; make a pint of thick white sauce, mix with it, off the fire, four ounces of grated cheese, cayenne pepper and salt to taste, and if mustard be liked, two teaspoonfuls of made mustard may be added. Fry some triangular croûtons with white of egg, stick a crescent-shaped border of them on a dish, inside them arrange a close row of sliced potato, cover it with some sauce, then repeat it in alternate layers till the crescent is high. Mask the whole with the sauce, sprinkle it thickly with grated cheese and fried bread-crumbs, heat and brown for about twenty minutes in the oven, and serve hot.

MISCELLANEOUS.

It is illegal to practice hypnotism in Belgium.

IN Fiji the coinage consists chiefly of whale's teeth, those of greater value being dyed red. The natives exchange twenty white teeth for one red one, as we change copper for silver.

THE latest suggestion for cyclists in the way of footwear is sandals. They would certainly be easy, and better than any other foot-covering from a hygienic standpoint.

LION-TAMERS, as a rule, prefer lions to lionesses, and dislike a troupe of both sexes mixed. In such cases the danger of entering the den is quadrupled, and mischief is pretty sure to result sooner or later.

THE deepest hole yet bored in the earth runs 6,571 feet below the surface of the soil. This is at Rybrik, in Upper Silesia. An interesting feature was the record of temperature taken. At the surface it was 59.6 degrees. At 6,571 feet it reached 167 degrees Fahr.

AFTER several unsuccessful attempts and three years' labour, the unparalleled feat of cutting a ring out of a single diamond has been accomplished by the patience and skill of M. Antoine, one of the best known lapidaries of Antwerp. The ring is about six-eighths of an inch in diameter.

A POLISH chemist is said to have invented an anesthetic which volatilises rapidly upon exposure to the air, rendering the persons near unconscious for a long time. It is calculated that in warfare a bomb exploded in the midst of the enemy would have the effect of putting the entire body to sleep.

THE ocean contains several fish which clothe and adorn themselves. The most conspicuous of them is the antennarius, a small fish frequenting the Sargasso Sea, which literally clothes itself with sea-weed, fastening the pieces together with sticky, gelatinous filaments, and then, as it were, holding the garment on with its fore fins.

A PROFESSOR in the University of Geneva has invented an apparatus which will, it is claimed, enable almost every deaf person to hear, even those whose hearing seems to be entirely destroyed. It is called the microphonograph, and magnifies sound on the same principle as a magnifying lens increases light. A battery is used with more or less strength, according to the patient to be dealt with. Absolute deafness is said to be extremely rare; the nerves are dull and unresponsive, but not totally dead, save in very extreme cases. The inventor of this apparatus is preparing to exhibit at the Paris Exposition a machine, by means of which an audience of ten thousand deaf persons, if so many can be gotten together, may listen to lectures and have the full benefit of entertainments of various sorts.

ONE of the most beautiful and without doubt the costliest materials ever woven in Lyons, France, is a magnificent and unique brocade manufactured for the German Emperor. The ground is silvery white silk, and the highly raised design consists of bold sprays of flowers and foliage, among which bright plumed birds disport themselves. Every petal, leaf or feather is perfect, and the whole stands out in such strong relief that at a distance the effect is as though the pattern was laid lightly upon the silk beneath. One weaver alone was capable of producing this masterpiece, and it took him many long months to complete a piece of sufficient length for a gown. The wages he received, in addition to his ordinary pay, were at the rate of 20 dols. per yard, the eventual price of the brocade being 120 dols. per yard. The stuff had been specially ordered for a state gown for the Empress, but when her Majesty beheld it she instantly exclaimed that it was far too beautiful to cut up, and gave the command that curtains be made of it instead of utilizing it for the purpose originally intended. Up to that date the most expensive material on record was the cloth of gold bought by Louis XIV. for a dressing gown, which cost, according to modern reckoning, the respectable sum of 85 dols. per metre.



GRATEFUL WOMEN

from all parts of the World have expressed their full appreciation of the splendid labour-saving advantages of

SUNLIGHT SOAP

It has brought a welcome rest to millions of women by lightening the labours of washing-day, and sweetening and brightening the home.

SUNLIGHT SOAP NEVER DISAPPOINTS.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

WIZ.—We cannot advise you.
N. C.—Only in certain districts.
FAED.—You can order through a newagent.
R. B.—You cannot legally marry your niece.
FLEDA.—Consult some educational bookseller.
R. V.—The town of Dudley is in Worcestershire.
RALPH.—You must attend the court in answer to it.
G. M.—The Derby is a race for three-year-olds only.
RICHARD.—You might communicate with the secretary.
M. T.—The Blackwall Tunnel was opened on May 22nd.
PAUL.—It should be done as soon as possible after the default.
CURIOUS.—There would be no harm in trying the experiment.
DOUBTFUL.—It is really a matter of personal taste or choice nowadays.
R. L.—In numerous cases paraffin has proved an excellent remedy.
ISQUENZA.—Louis the Fourteenth of France reigned seventy-four years.
R. C.—A British Minister cannot declare war on his own responsibility.
ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—We do not think you would have any claim for compensation.
THEORITICAL.—Cover a burn with common baking soda, moistening the place just enough to make it adhere.
K. F.—The widow is entitled to one-third of the property; the rest belongs to the children in equal shares.
CHINA.—The population of London is 4,000,000. The population of Paris is 2,400,000; and that of New York 2,000,000.
REBORN.—It is a wind instrument of the reed kind, furnished with eleven holes, which are stopped by the fingers of the left hand.
B. G.—When "heat lightning" is visible there is a storm-cloud in the same direction, though it may not be seen nor the thunder heard.
REGULAR READER.—There are poisonous compounds that are sometimes used, but these are dangerous to have about, and should be used only as a last resort.

BOB.—If you hold your face over a bowl of boiling hot water for a short time, then rub with a rough towel, your "blackheads" will disappear for a time.

BELLA.—The proper thing for you to have done would have been to pass the whole affair by in silence, and quietly out the acquaintance of the offending party.

W. L.—You will get latest and most reliable information on the subject you write about from the Government's Emigrants' Information Office, 31, Broadway, London, S.W., on writing there for it.

SCHOEN-ONE.—You will find the quotation, "In maiden meditation, fancy free," in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act II, Scene 2.

THE FISHERMAN'S WIFE.

My love sailed forth from the haven fair—

The sun shone on the sea,

And dainty perfume was on the air,

Distilled from mead and lee,

That day when the sun gleamed on the sea,

And my love sailed westward far from me.

That night the bell in the lighthouse rang—

In dismal monotone,

Till each echo that answered the iron tongue

Sounded like a piteous moan.

And the sea waves seemed to groan and groan,

While the winds sobbed round my cottage lone.

My love came not to the haven fair

That night from the angry sea,

For the winds roared not my deep despair,

Nor the waves so wild and free,

Coursing that night on the stormy sea,

They wafted my love to eternity.

OTHELLO.—If you are so unreasonably jealous, you ought not to marry at all, as you would be certain to make your wife miserable, and live in a constant state of domestic infidelity.

TROUBLED.—It is very obvious that if disagreements occur before marriage, they will surely happen with much greater frequency after the nuptial knot has been tied.

DIANA.—The name of the river in India in which diamonds of the finest quality have been found, is Mahanuddy. It falls into the Bay of Bengal. Diamonds have also been found in its tributaries.

B. B.—An illegitimate child has no claim to his father's name, and cannot, therefore, lawfully marry in that name; although, if the marriage was celebrated by banns, it would not thereby be invalidated.

AIR.—The toucan is a native of South America, and is one of the most extraordinary birds in the world. It has a bill from six to seven inches long, and in some places two inches in breadth, but it is very slight on account of its spongy texture.

KITTY.—The following is very good: Mix one-half cup of butter, one cup of sugar, three-fourths of a cup of milk, two eggs, one teaspoonful of baking powder, and one and three-fourths cups of flour. Flavour with vanilla. This recipe is very nice for Washington pie.

VERY WORSHIP.—You might try greasing some plates with lard, laying these in their haunts, and when the traps are well-filled by the pests feasting on the lard, hold the plates over the kitchen fire, and they will run off with the melting lard, and that batch will be got rid of; then reset.

C. B.—Fire has the same effect upon the horse as the candle has upon the moth, whose eyes are organized to bear only a small amount of light. When, therefore, it comes within the light of a candle, its sight is overpowered and its vision confused, and as it cannot distinguish objects, it pursues the light itself, and flies against the flame.

OUATON.—"Once in a blue moon" is a saying which appears to be founded on fact. A Scandinavian captain named Salvason, in Chinese waters, was fortunate enough to see a blue moon several years ago, about the time when the atmosphere was supposed to be impregnated with the dust of the Krakatoa eruption. The colour was like that of a hedge-sparrow's egg—a pale, rather greenish, blue.

THE LONDON READER can be sent to any part of the world, post-free Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly, One Shilling and Eightpence. The yearly subscription for the Monthly Part, including Christmas Part, is Eight Shillings and Eightpence, post-free.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS and VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of any Booksellers.

NOTICE.—Part 454, Now Ready, price Sixpence, post-free, Eightpence. Also Vol. LXVIII, bound in cloth, 4s. 6d.

THE INDEX to Vol. LXVIII is now Ready; Price One Penny, post-free, Three-halfpence.

ALL LETTERS to be Addressed to the Editor of THE LONDON READER, 25, Catherine Street, Strand, W.C.

*. We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

BEECHAM'S PHOTO-FOLIO.

"Marvellous Value for the Price."—*Publishers' Record.*

BEECHAM'S PHOTO-FOLIO.

"Worth a Guinea a Book."—*Photographic News.*

BEECHAM'S PHOTO-FOLIO

Will Help you to Decide where to go for your Holidays.

BEECHAM'S PHOTO-FOLIO

Will Show you the way if you Require a Change of Air.

BEECHAM'S PHOTO-FOLIO

Will be Just the Thing when you are Off for a Day in the Country.

The fact is, the Proprietor of "BEECHAM'S PILLS" has, by the publication of "BEECHAM'S PHOTO-FOLIO," filled a long-felt want. The majority of Britons have only been able to form a limited idea of the beauties of their own country, as, until now, reliable photographic view reproductions have not been brought within the reach of the people. BEECHAM'S PHOTO-FOLIO comprises upwards of Two THOUSAND selected views of Great Britain and Ireland. The series has been published in book form, each book containing 24 choice views (5 in. by 3 5/8 in.) in local combination; artistically printed on specially prepared English-made paper, to be sold for ONE PENNY each Volume. The placing of an order for the first issue of BEECHAM'S PHOTO-FOLIO of OVER FIVE MILLION BOOKS is the main reason that they are such "MARVELLOUS VALUE FOR THE PRICE."

The Proprietor of "BEECHAM'S PILLS" has been found fault with by interested parties for giving too much for the money, but the public will not mind this, neither does he. Tourist Agents, Secretaries of Excursion Clubs, Schools, Choirs, Picnic Parties, &c., should get specimens of BEECHAM'S PHOTO-FOLIO VOLUMES. The following Books are now out:—

ENGLAND & WALES.

Aberystwyth
Barmouth and Dolgelly
Bath
Bottis-y-Coed
Birmingham
Blackpool
Bournemouth
Brighton (Vol. 1)
" (Vol. 2)
Bridlington Quay
Bristol
Cambridge
Chester
Cheltenham and Gloucester
Clacton-on-Sea, Brightlingsea,
and Walton-on-the-Naze
Ciovelly and Bideford
Colwyn Bay
Cornwall (Vol. 1)
" (Vol. 2)

Derbyshire
Vol. 1 (Buxton District)
Vol. 2 (Matlock District)
Eastbourne
Exeter
Falmouth and Truro
Folkestone and Dover
Harrogate
Hastings and St. Leonards
Hilfracombe
Isle of Wight (Vols. 1, 2, 3)
Lake District (Vol. 1)
" (Vol. 2)
" (Vol. 3)
London (Vols. 1 to 8)
Lincoln
Lytham and St. Annes-on-Sea
Leamington and Warwick
Liverpool
Llandudno
Lynnton and Lynmouth
Manchester
Malvern and Worcester
Margate and Herne Bay

Morecambe and Lancaster
New Brighton
North Wales Coast—Conway
to Carnarvon
Nottingham
Oxford
Plymouth
Portsmouth and Southsea
Ramsgate
Redcar and Saltburn
Rhyll
Ripon, Bolton Abbey, and
Fountains Abbey
Scarborough
Sheffield
Snowdon and Llanberis
Southampton, Salisbury, and
Winchester
Southport
Southend-on-Sea
Stratford-on-Avon
Teignmouth, Dawlish, and
Exmouth
Tenby and St. Davids

Thames Valley (Vol. 1)
" (Vol. 2)
Torquay
Whitby
Weston-super-Mare
Weymouth
Yarmouth, Lowestoft and
Norwich
York

ISLE OF MAN.

(Vol. 1) Douglas District
(Vol. 2) Ramsey District
(Vol. 3) Port Erin, Port St.
Mary, &c.

CHANNEL ISLANDS.

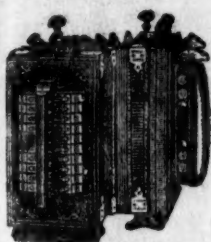
(Vol. 1) Jersey
(Vol. 2) Guernsey and Sark

BEECHAM'S PHOTO-FOLIO is on sale at most Newsagents, but persons unable to purchase from their local bookseller any particular Volumes, can obtain all they require by sending 1½d. for each Volume to—

The Proprietor of "BEECHAM'S PILLS,"
ST. HELENS, LANCASHIRE.

NOTE.—The Proprietor cordially invites individuals, and members of corporate bodies, who are interested in their special localities, to suggest to him any improvement in the selections with a view to the next edition of BEECHAM'S PHOTO-FOLIO being in every way up-to-date and full of special features of charm and interest only.





CAMPBELL'S GOLD MEDAL MELODEONS

With Organ and Celestial Tone, and Charming Bell Accompaniments.

NO HOME SHOULD BE WITHOUT ONE. The Solace Psalm, the Soul-stirring Hymn, and the Cheerful Song, can all be played on these Charming Instruments. No knowledge of Music required.

ENORMOUS DEMANDS. Selling in Thousands. 100,000 Testimonials.

Special Offer to the readers of the LONDON READER.

Campbell's "Gem" Melodeon	...	Price only	6/6
Campbell's "Miniature" Melodeon	...	"	10/6
Campbell's "Paragon" Melodeon	...	"	14/6
Campbell's "Favourite" Melodeon	...	"	16/6

Cut out this and send P.O.O. for the amount. Either sent carriage paid in Great Britain and Ireland. Money returned if not approved. ORDER AT ONCE.

All lovers of music should at once send for our NEW Illustrated Privilege Price List for 1897, now ready. 150,000 of these valuable lists sent out yearly. Send penny stamp to

CAMPBELL & CO., Musical Instrument Makers, 116, Trongate, Glasgow.

Established 50 years.

N.B.—Beware of worthless imitations.

To Make a Delicious Cup of Tea without Using a Teapot.



(Mention Paper.)

Electro-plate on Nickel Silver ... each. 3s. 6d.
Solid Hall marked Silver ... 11s. 6d.
Cheaper quality Nickel Silver ... 1s. 0d.
Obtainable everywhere or Post free from

"UNICUS."

22, THAVES INN, HOLBORN CIRCUS, E.C.

HOVEN'S CLIP FOR SUSPENDING STOCKINGS WITHOUT GARTERS.

SOLD EVERYWHERE.

SOLE MAKER—ALFRED BREESE, LONDON.

BOVRIL

Is the vital principle of Prime Ox Beef obtained from selected Cattle reared in Australia and South America. It develops the Muscular System, giving Fresh Strength and Increased Vitality to the Healthy, whilst

AS A

Means of Stimulating and Sustaining Invalids it has no equal, being meat and drink at one draught, and providing the most perfect Concentrated yet easily Digestible Nourishment in the form of a pleasant

BEVERAGE.

Bovril Limited, Food Specialists, London, E.C.

Directors:

The Right Hon. LORD PLAYFAIR, G.C.B., LL.D., DR. PARQUHARSON, M.P., and others.

SULPHOLINE

Bottles Sold Everywhere.

The Cure for Skin Diseases, Eruptions, Blisters, Bores, Acne, Disfigurements. Makes the Skin Clear, Smooth, Supple, Healthy.

LOTION

PEPPER'S

2s. 6d. SOLD EVERYWHERE.

GREAT BODILY STRENGTH!
GREAT NERVE STRENGTH!
GREAT MENTAL STRENGTH!
GREAT DIGESTIVE STRENGTH!

Promotes Appetite, Cures Dyspepsia, Hysteria, Nervous Complaints, &c.

QUININE AND IRON TONIC

LADIES.

INDISPENSABLE TO LADIES! Particularly those who desire a quick, safe and reliable and non-injurious remedy for all obstructions and irregularities, a medicine which cures (usually in a few hours) cases which have baffled the skill of the best medical men. No lady need despair, as the most obstinate and helpless cases have been immediately relieved by this remedy. Mrs. Wilson, of Honor Oak Park, Forest Hill, says: "Your invaluable remedy took immediate effect; in less than 12 hours I was all right, after 18 weeks of misery and hopelessness." A properly certified guarantee is enclosed with testimonials and medicine. One package at 4/6 is usually sufficient for any case. Ladies, send at once fully directed envelope for particulars and proofs. I will forfeit £2,000 if the testimonials are not genuine. Thousands of unsolicited testimonials have been received. Do not be misled by showy advertisements and other so-called remedies which are utterly worthless and fraudulent imitations.

NOTICE.—This wonderful remedy guaranteed to have the largest sale in the entire world, being the oldest and only harmless medicine of its kind for ladies, and cures more patients in one month than all other Female Remedies put together in twelve months. This can be proved by our Testimonials.

If you require more particulars, I will send you per return of post, in sealed letter, post-free, a splendid Book (34 pages and Guide, cloth covers (60 pages and 40 illustrations of Ladies' Appliances), and full particulars of the wonderful effective remedies as advertised and sold in every town and village in Great Britain. Consultations Free every day 3 to 7. Established over 100 years.

Do not delay, but write at once privately to

MADAME FRAIN,

MEDICAL INSTITUTE, HACKNEY ROAD, LONDON, N.E.

(OPPOSITE SHOREDITCH CHURCH.)

WHELPTON'S PILLS

Should always be kept at hand

WHELPTON'S PILLS

Have enjoyed 50 Years' Success

WHELPTON'S PILLS

The Best General Family Medicine

WHELPTON'S PILLS

Cure Headache at Once

WHELPTON'S PILLS

Set your Liver in Order

WHELPTON'S PILLS

Will keep good in all Climates

WHELPTON'S STOMACH PILLS

The Best Dinner Pills

WHELPTON'S OINTMENT

Cures Eczema

WHELPTON'S OINTMENT

Heals Cuts, Burns, etc., like Magic.

Ask for WHELPTON'S PILLS & see that you get them

Sold by all Chemists, 7½d., 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. per box, Or of the Proprietors,

G. WHELPTON & SON, 3, Crane Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

Free by Post in the United Kingdom for 8, 14, or 33 Stamps.

THE SALE OF



Sunlight Soap

Is more than double that of any other soap in the World.

It is used from Lands' End to John O'Groats;
It is used from Paris to Peru, and from Bombay to Brazil;
It is used in American Log Cabins, and Canadian Homesteads;
It is used by the South African Miner, and in the Australian Bush.

USED ALL OVER THE CIVILIZED WORLD.

*Less Labour,
Greater Comfort.*

*Appointed by Special Royal Warrant
Soapmakers to Her Majesty the Queen*

NATIONAL SILEX OPTICAL & AURAL CO.

(F. G. REIN'S PATENT.)

SPECIALISTS IN EYE AND EAR AIDS.

SILEX LENS ARE THE BEST YET SOLD.

PRIZE MEDALS, 1851, 1853, 1855, 1862, 1867, 1873, 1878, 1886.

WRITE OR CALL AT THE

PARADISE FOR THE DEAF,

108, Strand, London, W.C.

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS AND NERVOUS DISORDERS,

SUCH AS

Sick Headache, Constipation,

Weak Stomach, Impaired

Digestion, Disordered Liver,

and Female Ailments.

Sold everywhere, in Boxes, 9d., 1s. 1d., and 2s. 9d. each, with Full directions.

The 1s. 1d. Box contains Fifty-six PILLS.

THE SALE IS NOW SIX MILLION BOXES PER ANNUM.

WHEN WASHING CLOTHES
USE ONLY

**Reckitt's
Blue.**

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

PART 436. VOL. LXVIII.—OCTOBER, 1897.

CONTENTS.

SERIAL STORIES.

	PAGE
THE JEALOUS SISTER	417, 441, 466, 490
THE SECRET OF THE MINE	496
THE TRIALS OF HERMIONE	421, 445, 469, 493
THE UNCLE'S SECRET	424, 449, 473

NOVELETTES.

AN UNION OF HEARTS	433
LORD DUNMORE'S WIFE	457
THE CASHIER'S SISTER	409
THE NURSE AT ST. VITA'S	481

SHORT STORIES.

	PAGE
CHARLIE'S MOTHER	448
FORTUNE AND THE BEGGAR	452
THE CURATE'S CHOICE	472

VARIETIES.

POETRY	431, 455, 465, 476, 479, 500, 503
FACETIA	429, 453, 477, 501
SOCIETY	430, 454, 478, 502
STATISTICS	430, 454, 478, 502
GEMS	430, 454, 478, 502
HOUSEHOLD TREASURES	430, 454, 478, 502
MISCELLANEOUS	430, 454, 465, 478, 502
NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS	431, 455, 479, 503

PRICE SIXPENCE.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED AT THE OFFICE, 26, CATHERINE ST., STRAND.

AND OF ALL BOOKSELLERS.

FOR YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE.

BEAUTIFUL HAIR.

IMPERIAL HAIR DYES & C**ONE LIQUID**

- No. 1..Black
 No. 2..Dark Brown
 No. 3..Light Brown
 No. 4 { Golden Brown
 or Auburn
 No. 5..Pure Golden

No. 6 Imperial
 Hair Grower

Harmless, Perfect,
 Permanent & Odourless.

A Medical Certificate
 with each bottle.



2/6, 3/6, 5/- & 10/6 (SECRETLY PACKED)
J. BRODIE 41 MUSEUM STREET, LONDON
 Established 1868. Once Tried, Always Used.



Quickly correct all
 irregularities, remove
 all obstructions, and
 relieve the distressing
 symptoms so preva-
 lent with the sex.

Bones 1s. 1½d. & 2s. 9d. (the
 latter contains three times
 the quantity) of all Chemists.
 Sent anywhere on receipt of
 15 or 34 stamps by E.T. Towle
 & Co., Manufacturers, Dry-
 den Street, Nottingham.

Beware of imitations injurious & worthless!

FOR VACANT POSITIONS on this COVER

Apply—
ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER,
 28, Catherine Street, Strand, London, W.C.

CROSSE & BLACKWELL'S

PURE
MALT VINEGAR,
PICKLES, SAUCES,
JAMS, SOUPS,
AND
POTTED MEATS

Are sold by Grocers and Stores
 throughout the World.

FOR COUGHS, COLDS, ASTHMA, BRONCHITIS.

DR. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S



CHLORODYNE.

DR. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S CHLORODYNE
 is the **TRUE PALLIATIVE** in
NEURALGIA, GOUT, CANCER,
TOOTHACHE, RHEUMATISM.

IMPORTANT CAUTION.

The **IMMENSE SALE** of this **REMEDY** has given rise to many
UNSCRUPULOUS IMITATIONS.

Be careful to observe Trade Mark.

Of all Chemists, 1s. 1½d., 2s. 9d., and 4s. 6d.

DR. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S CHLORODYNE
 rapidly cuts short all attacks of
EPILEPSY, SPASM,
COLIC, PALPITATION,
HYSTERIA.

SOLE MANUFACTURER,

J. T. DAVENPORT,
33, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, W.C.